" Where there is no vision the people perish."

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POETRY AND MODERN LIFE*

I HAVE been a reader, a lover, and a writer of poetry from my earliest years—literally all my life, for I cannot remember a time when it did not seem to me the greatest thing in life—and such ideas as I am able to suggest to you are not the facile expressions of opinion of a casual reader, but the whole mind of a devotee—that is to say, of one who agrees whole-heartedly with the view written to me a year or two ago by Sir Edmund Gosse, that "poetry is the highest of all professions." Yet, to speak of poetry is to speak of fundamental beliefs and truth : it is difficult to discuss openly things very dear to one, and to do that fully is impossible. It would, of course, be easy enough if one's interest lay in criticism and study ; but I am not a critic at all, except in so far as everyone is of the art he loves. Such a one inevitably and unconsciously criticises by his own standards all he reads, old and new, and is—if he have any artistic conscience—the harshest of all critics to himself.

But between the attitude of the writer and that of the critic by choice and profession there is a wide difference ; and it is obvious enough on reflection that it must be so. The critic is mainly engaged in study and comparison, the writer in meditation and creation : not many people have that dual quality of mind which enables them to be both. The name of Matthew Arnold, of course, occurs to one ; but there are not many instances of a man gaining distinction both in criticism and in original poetry. It is almost a necessary consequence of the different requirements of the two that it usually happens that the critic is vastly more learned than the writer, a fact which sometimes has this further paradoxical consequence that the critic falls into errors of supposition from which, if he were a creator, he would probably be free : for example, he

* From an address delivered to a special meeting of the Poetry Society on March 19.

frequently attributes to a happy chance an effect for which the creator has laboriously striven, and, *vice versa*, frequently blames the latter for failing to produce an effect which the creator had considered and rejected as undesirable for the particular object he had in mind. More often still, the critic, delving into the recesses of his own reading, attributes to the writer a source of inspiration quite unknown to him : the critic finds a metre or a thought in some early little known poet, and shows himself full of ingenuity in devising theories to account for the supposition that a writer some centuries later who uses that metre or has a parallel thought, read and noted his predecessor's work ; whereas a writer knows how often such a supposition is wholly erroneous—so far from deriving, imitating, or plagiarising, he has re-invented or worked out a thought original to himself as it was to his predecessor.

This is a digression ; and yet I hope it is not irrelevant. It emphasises my view that the critic and the writer look upon poetry from necessarily different points of view, and in talking about it one ought to make it plain from which angle one is looking. I speak, then, not as a critic either by choice or by profession, but as a writer who, with whatever degree of success or failure, is devoting himself to the endeavour to add to the sum total of true poetry. I choose that periphrasis, because it seems to me that the man who boldly uses the word " poet " of himself must have a strangely constituted stock of modesty. Very few people have the temerity to describe themselves as " statesmen " : the word has within it an implication of praise, a statement not merely of endeavour but also of achievement. The word " poet " has more, for there have always been more people in the world at any one time deserving the title " statesman " than of those deserving the title " poet "—and yet " poet " and " poem " and " poetry " are continually being used in most unsuitable connections. They are three of the finest words in the language and ought never to be so cheapened. I repeat quite simply, therefore, that I speak solely as a man devoting himself to the endeavour to write poetry—there can be no higher aim ;

and as for failure—well, Keats has summarised that for all time in his preface to *Endymion*.

In examining the place of poetry in the world of to-day we are confronted at once by the constantly repeated assertion that poetry is not, and can no longer be, the vital force which it was in former times. The world, we are told, is older, more cynical, busier: the hues are grown sober, the glamour less. We live in days when people no longer quote the classics, no longer have time for the graces; when letter-writing is a lost art; when romance —in spite of Kipling's poem—is dead; when everything is subject, to use the words of Henry James, to "the fatal fusions and uniformities inflicted on our newer generations, the running together of all the differences of form and tone, the ruinous liquefying wash of the great industrial brush over the old conditions of contrast and colour." We are lives caught up in the whirl and rush, the telephone buzzing in our ears, the motor-bicycle zug-zugging and the motor-bus rumbling along outside. One might go on and elaborate the differences between the past and present indefinitely; it will be enough to sum them up in a sentence by saying that we crowd into a day distances and experiences which would not only have sufficed our ancestors for a year had they been in any way possible to them, but many of which lay wholly outside their knowledge and even their imagination.

In great degree, of course, this is true; but is the implication true? Is it true that as a consequence poetry no longer has, or can have, the same power as of old? Surely, rightly considered, it is just because of the modern conditions that poetry is *more*, and not less, necessary to the world to-day? If you spend most of your lives in noisy, dusty streets, do not times come when your whole soul craves for the silence and freshness of the country, for space in which to draw deep breaths of freedom? If you are perpetually in crowds, does not solitude occasionally seem beyond all price? If you are continually in the midst of gaiety, do not you long at times to be serious? Finally, if you dwell in the valleys, do you never lift up

your eyes to the hills and sigh to set foot upon them? Of course, to every human soul comes this need. Man lives by contrast; it is a necessity of his being. The less poetry there seems to be in the daily affairs of modern life, the greater the real need of it. At bottom, man's true character, the impulses which sway and drive him on, are the same as they were in the days of Homer and before. We can say of ourselves as compared to men of other ages what Shylock said of Jews as compared to Christians: "If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge?" The master-passions, love, ambition, jealousy, and fear, remain with us unchangingly, though our social customs and conventions change from year to year. The famous simile of the water-lily, yielding to every puff of wind, yet rooted at its base, applies in this connexion also; however complex and evasive modern life may become, much in life is constant, and the constant part is that which in reality governs the remainder.

The difficulty, of course, lies in bringing this home to people who are disinclined to pause, and, when momentarily not in motion, desire relaxation rather than thought. I am not forgetting among the many and great differences between this age and, say, the days of even a hundred years ago, one which has a tremendous bearing in this connexion, namely, the amazing development of the novel. As one of our most eminent critics, Mr. John Bailey, has said, in his essay on Thackeray: "By the end of the century [that is, the nineteenth century], aided by the decay of the drama, the once despised novel could claim to be the principal interpreter of the mind of the age, second only in dignity to poetry and far superior to it in general popularity." And yet the novel can never give the world what it is in the power of poetry, true poetry, great poetry, alone to give.

It is, however, undeniable that in the rush of modern life, with its superabundant mass of fiction, its enjoyment of the short story, its cult of the head-line and the paragraph,

it is hard, much harder than in the more spacious days of the last and earlier centuries, for poetry to get a hearing. I constantly meet people who say to me, "What are you doing now?" If I reply, "Writing poetry, or rather, trying to write it," I get a startled glance as much as to say, "Well, that is an extraordinary thing to be doing!" or a "Yes, yes, but what are you doing in the way of *work*?" Sometimes even a sentence expressive of regret that I should apparently be abandoning for a will-o'-the-wisp practical and public affairs. It is true that poetry is not now recognised as it was as worthy of serious attention, as having a daily practical value :—

> Even the majestic voices of the dead
> Who in thy service chanted are grown faint;
> No more the echoes of their songs are heard
> Daily within men's lives; they come not down,
> As the free winds through wooded steeps, to make
> A symphony perpetual through men's fears.

But that fact does not alter the truth that poetry has a task all the more necessary because its value is not so generally recognised. To declare that task, to make men listen, to win recognition for the value and utility, as well as for the charm and beauty, of poetry is, it seems to me, the real work for which such a society as the Poetry Society exists.

In former times every man with any claims to culture was avowedly interested in poetry; many wrote it, all knew and quoted it. To-day it is a common experience to hear an educated man say unashamedly that he does not care for poetry. What does he mean? Would he admit with equal frankness that he entertained no patriotic thoughts? If not, how is it possible for him not to care for certain passages, say, in Shakespeare or some of Wordsworth's poems? Or that he cared nothing for the beauties of the country? If not, how can he be deaf to the charm of many descriptions in Keats or Tennyson? Or that he never was visited by religious thought? If not, is he unaware of Milton? Or, finally, that he never was in

love ? If not, how can he ignore a thousand songs from the poets of all ages ? In short, if a man truthfully and deliberately says that he does not care for poetry, he is making an admission that he is blind and deaf to love of his country, to love generally, to Nature, and to religion ; his statement can have no other meaning, and yet he does not mean to make any such admission ; he does not realise that that is the logical conclusion from his words. Why not ? Probably, if the truth were known, no man says that truthfully ; it is either a pose—and there is quite as much a pose of ignorance as one of knowledge—or he is speaking of something with which he has no acquaintance or else just such a partial acquaintance as has frightened him. There are people no doubt—everyone has met such—who genuinely do mean their words when they say that they do not care for poetry, just as there are people who say, and genuinely mean, that they do not care for music. I have known a few to whom all music of any kind whatsoever, even a simple melody or a jolly song, was distasteful—and it undoubtedly requires all sorts to make a world : there would be little poetry and less fiction if it were not so. But people completely and sincerely deficient in such respects are few and far between, and, moreover, usually sorrowfully aware of their loss.

The vast majority of people who make the sweeping assertion that they do not care for poetry do not really mean " all poetry " ; they mean that much, perhaps even most, of it does not appeal to them. I find it almost impossible to believe that there exists a man—or a woman —of generous mind and any degree of intelligence at all to whom no poetry of any kind would make its appeal if his or her attention was properly directed to passages or poems suited to their particular aspirations or ideals ; for the range of poetry is as wide as life itself ; it is illustrative of every side of life and every mood of man. Again and again it puts into perfect form the thoughts and feelings of the average human being. And yet the average Englishman, living for the most part in the prose of his daily occupations, is afraid of it ; he has dim recollections of

having been forced against his will at school to read or learn poetry he did not understand; above all, he is horribly frightened of the "high-brow"; he would sooner die than admit he had any intelligence. These things are facts, and they do undeniably make it difficult for poetry to flourish, and yet do they alter it? Do they remove its truth? Is it not rather those whose eyesight is poor who stand especially in need of spectacles?

I hope you will forgive me if I venture to quote at this point from *The Spirit of Happiness*, the poem on which I have been long at work.* I do so, because I wish to emphasise that I am not giving casual opinions, but the sincerest beliefs of my life. I am going to quote two passages in which I endeavour to set forth my belief in the essential value of poetry to the world. Of the first extract, from the opening pages, I need only say by way of explanation that Apollo is taken as representing the Spirit of Poetry and Hephaistos as representing the Spirit of Machinery:—

Hephaistos rules, heaven's ministrant supreme,
And thou, Apollo, like a star bedimmed
Within the sky's cloud-caverns, watchest afar
In unaccounted, silent majesty.
Why then to thee should I lift up my voice,
Naming a mind creative to thy will
The highest under heaven and the still days
To thee devoted more serenely blessed,
However scant the guerdon or dim the torch
That burns for thee, than other service given
On lauded, public paths? Because thou art,
Now as aforetime, at the spirit's core
Of truth eternal and thy touch alone
Still strikes the heart to music: thou dost move,
Like justice, along silent ways; thy breath,
Borne from within, still stirs the fire to flame.
Whilst Earth endures thou art her gentleness,
The mountain source from which her beauty springs,
And even through grim, smoke-belching scenes of toil,
Hephaistos' very shrines, thou sheddest light.

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The second passage I should like to quote is part of the direct invocation to the Spirit of Poetry which forms the introduction to the fourth and final book of the poem :—

> Great, unseen Spirit, moving like the breath
> That on the ever-living ocean-paths
> Strengthfully sweeping gathers without cease
> Their bounty to the cloudland of its heart
> Till, to the mountains rising purified,
> That heart is opened and life-giving boon
> It sheds on Earth to slake the eternal thirst
> From heavenly mercy unconcealed—O thou,
> Beneficent, all-stirring influence, known
> Beyond remembrance in the parching soul,
> Of honour universal in Earth's youth
> Ere story was and needful to her age—
> Essence of childhood and of the child in man,
> Mother of dreams in the mind's infinity
> Begotten star-engirt, of tenderness,
> Of every impulse in man's heart a-wing
> From the earth-bound, eyeless drudging of his days
> Up to the hushed, lone mountain-ranges bathed
> In the soul's sunlight—Spirit of desire,
> Immortal Poetry, undying flame,
> A little feed thy servant's hunger now.

Now if it be true that poetry is in any degree what I have attempted to describe, the source of all beauty, not of thought alone, but also of deed, why is it that the necessity for it is not more generally admitted ? It is read to-day, much more read than many people imagine, and yet it is regarded in general as something lying outside daily, ordinary life, and not a positive, and indeed essential, contribution to it, as something which was all very well in the days of the minstrels and the troubadours, but is no longer in keeping with modern industrialism. I have tried to account in part for this total misconception, but there is still much left unaccounted for. For the rest, we must turn from the public to the poets themselves, and try to see whether they are to any extent to blame. I think they cannot by any means wholly escape. In respect of the

older poets, seated securely in the Temple of Fame, it is clear that most people of to-day will not read what they cannot readily understand; they have neither time nor mind any more to sit themselves down to puzzle out profundities, no patience with poetry, however beautiful, that needs an elaborate commentary. It seems to me, therefore, that obscurity comes first as a reason for neglect; a great deal of our poetry is unnecessarily difficult. I say "unnecessarily," because we have always before us the example of Shakespeare, the greatest of all our poets, full of the most profound thoughts, gorgeous imagery, and highest beauty. As a dramatist, he had to write what could be understood when first heard by the ordinary playgoer, and in consequence there is, except for occasional lines where the text is in dispute and where words are used which have become obsolete since he used them, hardly any passage in Shakespeare which cannot be clearly and immediately understood. That is true of few, very few, poets.

It was said of Cardinal Gasquet, "He is a man of simplicity, and successful simplicity is one of the hardest things to obtain. He is more than that; he is the very soul of sincerity." What two qualities could we more desire for poetry! The reason, no doubt, why poetry is so often lacking, in the former at any rate, is that unquestionably it is infinitely more difficult to write a great, simple poem than it is to write one which, however great, remains full of difficulty. Poetry is essentially compressed and comprehensive; it can never be as easy as prose can be—its nature and contents forbid—but it might often be far easier to understand than it is. And some of our greatest poets have been conspicuous sinners in this respect, and have in consequence not merely suffered a lack of due appreciation themselves, but have caused their brethren to suffer it also. It must be admitted that it affords some justification to the average man when students and lovers of poetry can dispute for years as to what exactly is meant by a certain passage or poem. Take *Endymion*; the critics are still variously expounding the real meaning of

Keats's longest work, and he is simple contrasted with some poets. Browning is a byword for obscurity, and in that connexion needs no comment; I will refer instead to George Meredith, and rather than bewilder your ears and minds with a passage chosen by way of illustration, let me quote again from Mr. John Bailey:—"The greatest appearance," says Mr. Bailey, "that Napoleon has yet made in our poetry is unquestionably to be found in that astonishing poem which is the second of Meredith's four 'Odes in Contribution to the Song of French History.'" Unfortunately the ode is one of the extremest examples of Meredith's involved and tortuous obscurity. The first reading of it is apt to leave the reader faint and gasping, a weary traveller struggling through an impenetrable forest under a midnight thunderstorm, seeing nothing of his path but what is shown him for an instant, and only for an instant, by flashes of lightning, which daze as much as they illumine. But for those who will take the trouble there is a path through the jungle, and it is worth finding." One can only say that most people are not explorers and will not take the trouble; and the result is that Meredith's poetry has never achieved its due recognition, has never had, and will never have, any wide influence on the life of the world. More than that, it is a stumbling-block in the way of others. "This," says the average man, "is great poetry; your critics say so; well, then, I have no use for poetry." That may be illogical, but it is hardly surprising. No, the longer I live, the more I write, the more certain I become that simplicity, however hard it may be to combine with greatness, is the first thing to be striven for by a poet.

Passing from that, there is another misconception which has had a very important bearing on the influence of poetry, the fiction that poets must of necessity be long-haired, dreamy weaklings—and as such to be derided. It was cheering to see in *The Times* a few days ago a leading article entitled, "The Toughness of Poets," arising out of Miss Lowell's new "Life of Keats" and decrying this fiction. It dies hard, and yet almost all the great poets

have been men of action also, at any rate men leading sane and vigorous lives, vitally interested in their fellows and the public movements of their times. It is the minor poet who is responsible ; he is far too often a *poseur*, a scorner of practicalities, a being who dwells exclusively in literary coteries and is encouraged to believe that literature is a substitute for life. A man very possibly cannot write great poetry whilst he is actually in the midst of affairs and rubbing shoulders with all sorts and conditions of men ; but before reflection and creation he must at least have had contact with life or he will not know upon what to reflect and what it is worth while to create. A poet needs more than other men a sense of values, a power of comparison ; the cloistered virtues and the uninformed imagination are rarely the sources of great poetry. I should like to elaborate this, but time forbids.

I have said I regard simplicity as one of the essentials if poetry is to retain its influence in the world ; I would add another, truth. The modern world is accustomed to see in magazines and newspapers under the supreme word "poetry," effusions which will not bear examination as truthful utterances for a moment. Readers get into the habit of thinking to themselves, "That is poetry, is it ? To me it seems simply rubbish." . . . . .

But we can leave this large class of verse and come to the attitude towards poetry characteristic of the serious young school of those who are trying to write it to-day. That is of more importance than the vacuous and the sentimental : it is the attitude which gives us alternatively what I have just described as unmusical violence. I believe that attitude to be wrong, and I believe that the average man turns from it because he, too, feels instinctively that it is wrong. He is served up with much that neither elevates, guides, nor cheers, but merely echoes, and echoes in one key—that of the weariness, depression, violence and disgust which have been the portion of the world in the last decade. But the function of poetry is not to echo, certainly not to echo only. It is to the poets that men have looked throughout the ages for inspiration and light, and what do we get from most

—not all, of course, but most—writers of it to-day? Bitterness. Let me, in order to avoid the invidiousness of singling out any contemporary writer of verse for reference, take by way of illustration the lines attributed by Mr. John Galsworthy in his latest novel to an imaginary character, Wilfred Desert, " the only male member of the aristocracy, says Mr. Galsworthy, " writing verse that any one would print " :—

> See 'ere! I'm myde o' nerves and blood
> The syme as you, not meant to be
> Froze stiff, up to me ribs in mud.
> You try it, like I 'ave, an' see!
>
> Aye, you snug beauty brass hats, when
> You stick what I stuck out that d'y,
> An' keep yer ruddy 'earts up—then
> You'll learn, may-be, the right to s'y:
>
> " Take aht an' shoot 'im in the snow,
> Shoot 'im for cowardice! 'E who serves
> His King and Country's got to know
> There's no such bloody thing as nerves."

The significance of those lines seems to me to be this: they are given by one of the most eminent, if not quite the most eminent, of living novelists as the characteristic work of the man he is portraying as the brilliant and widely-read young poet of to-day. Mr. Galsworthy gives no other example; his creation, *quâ* poet, stands or falls by this one; the lines are entirely in keeping with the character as portrayed, and the publisher in the novel thinks highly of them. They are clearly intended by Mr. Galsworthy as a production true to type; they have no meaning else. They are imitation, not satire, and I think no one can call them unlike or below the standard of much verse of recent years. What do we gain from them? Nothing whatever but a sense of futility; they aim no higher. They are an echo of a mood which made itself apparent towards the close of the war, a bitter, whining mood of weary disgust. It is part of Mr. Galsworthy's extreme cleverness that he has caught this for the

purpose of his novel; that is as much as to say that these lines are intensely ephemeral.

We all are aware that Tennyson has suffered much in popular estimation because he "dates"; he is dismissed contemptuously as "Victorian" by the bitter, realistic school of to-day. But it can hardly be questioned that this school is so entirely concerned with to-day, is so resolved to react against Victorianism, and is in consequence so frankly neo-Georgian that to-morrow its adherents will "date" to a far greater degree than ever be the lot of Tennyson. Most of them have little or nothing but their modernism; they deride Tennyson's music and almost unrivalled technique; they are so violently in love with proclaiming their emancipation that already there are signs that readers are tiring of them—after all, as Mr. Alfred Noyes has said, "No man can build a new city by throwing stones through old cathedral windows." Certain it is that no man can be a gainer by scorning the glorious heritage of his ancestors in letters: our literature is a development, and all that endures must be built on foundations already laid. Perpetually throughout the history of literature, English, European, universal, there has been, as there will continue to be, reaction against the prevailing modes. In the violence of their reaction the new school forget this; they think of it as a fact which has been and not as one which will be again.

It is the eternal truths, the basic laws of our existence, alone which are unchanging. For myself, I believe that people are beginning to be weary of squalid violence, photographic realism, and mere interpretation of the world weariness consequent upon the war. They are beginning—often unconsciously perhaps—to ask again for beauty and truth, to hope that they may be inspirited and not invariably depressed whenever they open a book. They will get no assistance yet from the novelists, who with the greater opportunities of prose are, almost without an exception, rioting in the extremes of ugliness of mood and thought: are they to get none from the poets also? As far as many, if not most, writers of it to-day are concerned, they turn to them in vain; but that assuredly is a short-lived phase.

It has always been the task and the privilege of poetry to be a lantern in dark places, to lead and not to follow; and, unless poetry is to perish, it will be again. And let us be assured at any rate as to this: bitterness, when all is said and done, is a petty quality; there never has been, and there never will be, great poetry written in a spirit of bitterness. Nor has any true poet in the history of literature, which is the history of the world, ever been content, as so many writers are to-day, merely to record in verse the atmosphere in which his lot has been momentarily cast; that is the function of journalism. The poet is always searching deeper, peering ahead, and trying, if not to "justify" at any rate to explain "the ways of God to men."

That brings me to the thought with which I must conclude. It is difficult, no doubt, in years of carnage, death, poverty, and distresses of all kinds, to preserve faith and face life bravely with eyes of sanity, neither to fly into extremes of dejection and hate, nor, airily ignoring the present, to sing "all's right with the world" and take refuge in an unreal realm of one's imagination; but, as Keats wrote in one of his letters: "difficulties nerve the spirit of a man." This preservation of faith is precisely what, above all else, is the task devolving upon the poet of to-day. How many have risen to it? That *duty* of Hope on which Wordsworth laid such emphasis, how many now endeavour to impress it on the hearts of men? I am in the happy position that I have been called both "a rare, old-fashioned poet" and also "a modern of the moderns"—incidentally, for the same volume of poems, which shows how little criticism is often worth; I may perhaps be permitted to believe that the truth is—as always—in the middle of the road: and these two mutually destructive criticisms embolden me to express fearlessly the faith that is in me. I say openly, therefore, that it would in my judgment be well both for the true and lasting benefit of the world to-day and also—a minor matter—for the permanence of contemporary poetry, if writers of it would beautify their spirits and win peace for their anxious and embittered minds by clinging to one

truth, the single truth which is unchanging throughout the ages. I will give it in the words of Wordsworth :—

> One adequate support
> For the calamities of mortal life
> Exists—one only ; an assured belief
> That the procession of our fate, howe'er
> Sad or disturbed, is ordered by a Being
> Of infinite benevolence and power ;
> Whose everlasting purposes embrace
> All accidents, converting them to good.

GORELL.

DRESS

WHO can dress at dawn in an opal gown
And wear like a scarf the fragrant air ;
Who be clothed at noon in limpid blue
With a lambent gem in her hair ;
Who can deck herself, when evening comes,
In cloudy textured cloth-of-gold,
And wear at night the starshine bright
In a purple velvet's fold ?
Who but I,
Who am the sky ?

MOIRA SETON.

SPRING

THE leaves have drunk in, every one,
The blue mists and the yellow sun ;
The yellow, and the dusky blue,
Till they are filled with such a hue
They almost drip with green.
So delicate, and green, and young,
So tender on the velvet tongue
Of milk-breathed kine who stand among
The dew-filled celandine.

ANTHONY SYLVESTER.

ELECTION

NOT beauty riding on the wind
Over the lindens with bright stride—

Not beauty bare on a lost peak,
Whom all men seek for, everywhere—

Not beauty slipping through the gray
Hour before day; or on some ship

Winging the foaming flying sea—
These can not be her real home;

But beauty here in quieter view,
Bodied in you, eager and dear—

Not bleak and dim; but bright as this
Soft burning kiss of limb to limb.

Not beauty blown across the moon—
But, night or noon, in you alone.

CLEMENT WOOD.

TELEPATHY

IS there an unseen pathway through the air,
Where eager thoughts, swift envoys of the soul,
Pass unimpeded to a distant goal
Unpillaged of the secret love they bear?
Suppose to-night a thought of mine should fare
Forth on that trackless way; couldst thou unroll
A chart of guidance? Could my will control
My uncompassed thought, which must the vastness dare?

I know not, but to-night a thought I send,
And, if it should the perilous way achieve,
Fling wide, I pray, thy soul's door to receive
My soul's communication, O my friend!
'Tis writ in cypher but thou hast the key;
Read, and flash back, through space, a thought to me.

ANNIE L. KNOWLES.

SOME EARLY SPANISH POETS—II*

LOPE DE VEGA: CALDERON.

AGAIN one must pass reluctantly over names upon which one would gladly dwell—Santa Teresa (1515–1582), whose poems, few as they are in number, have an abiding place in the sacred poetry which is the glory of Spain; San Juan de la Cruz (1549–1591), known to us as St. John of the Cross, author of "*The Dark Night of the Soul*," who glorified the most perfect forms of secular verse by the spiritual use he made of them; and, in a very different sphere, the well-known Luis de Góngora (1561–1627), whose technical skill was his undoing—a man decried by early critics and historians of literature, and stigmatised by the new word he gave to the Spanish language, *gongorismo*, the virtual equivalent of euphuism in England and of *préciosité* in France. Of late years he has been surprisingly rehabilitated, and the praise lavished on him to-day far outstrips the early censure.

The two great names in Spanish poetry claim all the space this article affords. The earlier of the two, Lope de Vega (1562–1635), has always been above all fluctuation of opinion. He was, and is, the greatest of all Spanish poets. He is Spain incarnate, and there has never been another poet so intensely national. He is popularly known by his plays, which he thought his finest work, but his true fame rests on his poems, of which he wrote an immense number, in every possible form.

Spain is a country of marvels, and this marvellous boy was less astonishing there than he would have been in other lands. At the age of five he is said to have read Latin as well as Spanish; before he could write he was in the habit of bribing his older schoolfellows with a share of his breakfast for taking down the verses he dictated; when he was ten he translated a long Latin poem into Castilian verse; when he was twelve he wrote a three-act comedy,

* The volume containing, amongst others, the articles published in THE POETRY REVIEW will give many more translations from the poets mentioned in these pages than space allows us to include, and the articles themselves will be somewhat extended.

El verdadero amante ("The True Lover"), which, with but slight revision, was acted in Madrid many years later, with a distinguished actor in the title-*rôle*.

He was born in Madrid, educated at the Imperial College in that city, and later studied at the University of Alcalá, where he took a degree. In his twenty-eighth year he married Isabel de Urbina, daughter of the King-at-Arms to Philip II. and Philip III. She died within a few years, and Lope turned soldier, joining the Armada in its disastrous voyage. In the midst of all the terror and tumult of that expedition he was able so to possess his soul that he wrote the greater part of his long poem, *La hermosura de Angelica* ("The Beauty of Angelica"). He returned to Spain with the remnant of the fleet, and presently married a second wife, Juana de Guardio.

Now, for a time, he was at peace, and happy. But his happiness was only a brief episode. His son Carlos, to whom he was tenderly attached, died in his seventh year, and not long afterward his wife died. He was completely bereft, and one is not surprised that his thoughts turned to religion. His early vicissitudes made him a soldier; his later sorrows made him a priest. He took orders in 1614, at the age of fifty-two.

The tonsure, alas! does not transform any man into an immediate saint, nor is it possible for character to change in a day. Lope, precocious in love as in literature, had always been occupied with intrigues more or less discreditable, and for many years his private life was sadly at variance with his religious professions. Towards the end he bitterly regretted his follies, and strove to expiate them by the severest penances. There was one terrible night when he underwent such extreme flagellation that the walls of his room were spattered with blood. Four days later he died. In him one sees epitomised the whole Spanish character—harsh and tender, arrogant and humble, sensual and spiritual. There is the man. One judges no one harshly. A man's work is his real self, and by that he stands.

Lope de Vega's works are almost beyond computation. His plays number 1,800, his *Autos* 400. The lowest number

of his sonnets is 600—it has been estimated by some writers at 900. He wrote eleven long poems in the *ottava rima*, and many others in various Italian metres. He excels, however, in the old Spanish measures in which much of his verse is written—the *letrillas* (rondels), the *silvas* (masses of irregular lines), the *quintillas* (five-line stanzas), the *redondillas*, where the first and fourth lines rhyme, and the second and third, as well as the *romances*, poems in octosyllabic metre, with alternate assonants. Of this enormous output Fitzmaurice-Kelly says: "How was it possible for him to write so much without exhausting time and trespassing upon eternity?"

We are not considering Lope as a dramatist, but as a poet, so I shall say nothing here of his plays, though lyrics and sonnets are scattered through them. It is enough, at the moment, to restrict ourselves to his non-dramatic poetry.

His first important poem, *La hermosura de Angelica*, which I have already mentioned, was written in 1588, but it was not published until fourteen years later. It is an imitation, not very successful, of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*. It is not without the sly humour which is one of this poet's characteristics. His next work of importance, *Los pastores de Belen* ("The Shepherds of Bethlehem"), has been called his masterpiece. It is a prose narrative most poetically told, and contains the history from the birth of the Virgin to the arrival of the Holy Family in Egypt. It is related by shepherds in the neighbourhood of Bethlehem. The following beautiful song is supposed to have been sung in a palm grove by the Virgin to the sleeping Child. Though none of the poems in the book have titles attached to them, this may well be called *A Cradle Song of the Virgin*:

Holy angels and blest,
Through these palms as ye sweep,
Hold their branches at rest,
For my babe is asleep.

And ye Bethlehem palm-trees,
As stormy winds rush
In tempests and fury,
Your angry noise hush;

Move gently, move gently,
Restrain your wild sweep;
Hold your branches at rest,—
My babe is asleep.

My babe all divine,
With earth's sorrows oppressed,
Seeks in slumber an instant
His grievings to rest;
He slumbers, he slumbers,
O hush then, and keep
Your branches all still,—
My babe is asleep.

Cold blasts wheel about him,
A rigorous storm,
And ye see how, in vain,
I would shelter his form;
Holy angels and blest,
As above me ye sweep,
Hold these branches at rest,—
My babe is asleep.

(*Tr.* G. Ticknor.)

The "Shepherds of Bethlehem" was dedicated to Carlos, the beloved little son, who died the same year in which it was published. Two years later a volume of sacred poems appeared, which contains many of the best known sonnets. Longfellow translated one of the most beautiful, No. XVIII, which he calls *To-morrow:*

Lord, what am I that with unceasing care
Thou didst seek after me, that Thou didst wait,
Wet with unhealthy dews before my gate,
And pass the gloomy nights of winter there?

O strange delusion! that I did not greet
Thy blest approach! and O to heaven how lost
If my ingratitude's unkindly frost
Has chilled the bleeding wounds upon Thy feet.

How oft my guardian angel gently cried:
"Soul, from thy casement look, and thou shalt see
How He persists to knock and wait for thee!"

And oh! how often to that voice of sorrow,
"To-morrow we will open," I replied;
And when the morrow came, I answered still "To-morrow."
(*Tr.* H. W. LONGFELLOW)

In 1634 Lope published a volume of humorous and burlesque poems, of which one achieved immediate and lasting fame—*La gatomachia* ("The Battle of the Cats"). This mock-heroic poem, whose subject is the love of two cats for the tabby Zapaquilda, parodies Ariosto and the epic poets, as well as some of the old ballads, with brilliant success. The story is told with sparkling gaiety and incomparable wit. It is to-day the most widely-read of any of his works. Spanish memory is long and Spanish fidelity is lasting.

Lope's genius flamed to the last. Only four days before the end, he wrote a sonnet and a *silva*, the latter with the title, *El siglo de oro* ("The Golden Age"), both of which I give in translation, for the personal interest attaching to them as the last lines written by a great poet:

ON THE DEATH OF A PORTUGUESE GENTLEMAN.

Lisbon, by the Greek's ancient magic made,
For her device may take the phœnix's sign,
Because, wise Gabriel, thy pen divine
Bestows more glory than his mighty blade;
Vigilant Time stands with bare scythe displayed,
No mortal may escape its stroke malign,
But so effulgent did thy merit shine,
Long the Destroyer his swift weapon stayed.
Alas! while yet thy boundless riches flow
Upon the land who doth thee Maker name,
(Since she a second life to thee doth owe,)
Thy laurels' place do funeral garlands claim;
But, losing life, thou endless gain canst show,
Since from thy death is born anew thy fame.
(*Tr.* E. C. H.)

These lines show the unfailing memory and unflagging mental energy of this marvellous man. The Portuguese gentleman whose death occasioned the sonnet was Gabriel Pereira de Castro, whose great poem, called *Ulysses*, had recently appeared. He is said to have surpassed

Camoens (from whose *Lusiads*, by the way, he borrowed freely) in the flexibility and harmoniousness of his versification. The reference, in the first line of the poem, "Lisbon, by the Greek's ancient magic made," is to the mythical founding of that city by Ulysses. One sees how apt the whole sonnet is.

The following lines from *The Golden Age* show that Lope's sense of rhythm, his colour, and his fluency were undiminished. The description of the entrance of Truth upon the scene glows like a bit of stained glass:

> Forth stepped a maiden modestly,
> Clad in a tunic like a flame,
> Thick-sewn with stars. (A star was she!)
> Her noble brow a crown did frame,
> Its every golden space and fret
> With jacinth and with topaz set.
> Her crimson-ribboned sandals were
> With emeralds decked, and rubies rare;
> The gentle breeze disclosing them
> Beneath her robe's embroidered hem,
> Each foot appeared a chrysolite,
> That made the ground she trod on bright.
>
> (*Tr.* E. C. H.)

One turns with regret from Lope de Vega, even though his great successor is to be the next subject of attention. And we find a definite link between them. In Spain poets seem to have handed on the torch, man to man. In 1622, when Lope was still in the fullness of his fame, a poetic contest was held in Madrid, at which a young man of two and twenty, hitherto unknown, carried off the prize, earning, as Lope wrote, "in his tender years the laurels which Time is wont to bestow only upon the hoary head." This fortunate young man was Pedro Calderon de la Barca (1600–1681). In less than ten years his renown had become so great that Lope, then approaching his seventieth year, formally recognised the young poet as his rightful successor.

Calderon was born in Madrid, educated at the Jesuit College of that city, and later continued his special studies

of philosophy and scholastic theology at the University of Salamanca. Like his predecessor, he was a soldier in his youth, a priest in middle life. Of his character one may say that he was very faithfully a courtier, very ardently a Royalist, very fervently a Catholic. Both Calderon and Lope lived in our own Golden Age when Shakespeare, Marlowe, Beaumont and Fletcher, Ben Jonson, Milton, were writing—a starry host. I do not find that English literature had any noticeable influence upon Spanish writers of that period, but it was known and read in Spain. One visualises the two Spaniards more clearly as the contemporaries of our unsurpassable poets. For the rest his life was serene ; his fame, almost from the first, secure. Wonderful that one so happy should be so great. The two men, Lope and Calderon, are differentiated with much acumen by Fitzmaurice-Kelly. "Lope de Vega," he says, "is the incarnation of the spirit of his country ; Calderon shows forth the spirit of an epoch." Lope is the great Spanish poet ; Calderon is a great Spanish poet of the seventeenth century.

Calderon's work as a dramatist was largely based upon those foundations of the drama which Lope had laid, but he carried them to a greater finish. Like other great writers, he borrowed freely from predecessors and contemporaries, and what he took he adorned. In him we find again that devotion to sacred poetry so characteristic of Spanish writers. He reigns supreme in the sphere of the *Autos sacramentales*, of which he wrote more than seventy.

These *Autos*, or Acts, were plays written to be performed on Corpus Christi Day, and were specially designed to honour the Real Presence in the Eucharist and the mystery of the love of Christ. They were the oldest form of the Spanish drama, and they had an extraordinarily strong hold upon the general public. In time their scope widened, and they became miracle and mystery plays, and sacred allegories. Like Spanish dramas, they contain lyrics and sonnets, as well as old ballad poetry. They belong to the class of poetic and religious drama in which are included the *Morte d'Arthur* and the legends of the Holy Grail.

Calderon was above all a dramatist, and the greater part of his lyrical poetry is incorporated in his plays. Two very beautiful sonnets occur in one of his most famous plays, *El principe constante* ("The Constant Prince"). The Spanish dramatists use sonnets in their plays as the English use lyrics. It seems strange to us that a sonnet should be a variation from the body of the dramatic lines, since in English poetic drama the number of syllables in the lines of blank verse is the same as in those of the sonnet. But all early Spanish plays were written in short trochaic lines, often rhymed, nearly always with assonants, and the "measured tread" of the sonnet was a distinct break. Lovers, in Spanish plays, burst into sonnets as their English prototypes break into songs. Of the sonnets I quote, the first is spoken by the Prince to the Princess Phenix, and the second is her reply.

I

These points of light, these sparkles of pure fire,
Their twinkling splendours boldly torn away
From the reluctant sun's departing ray,
Live when the beams in mournful gloom retire.
These are the flowers of night that glad Heaven's choir,
And o'er the vault their transient odours play.
For if the life of flowers is but one day,
In one short night the brightest stars expire.
But still we ask the fortunes of our lives
Even from this flattering spring-tide of the skies,
'Tis good or ill, as sun or star survives.
Oh! What duration is there? Who relies
Upon a star? or hope from it derives,
That every night is born again, and dies?

(*Tr.* D. F. McCarthy.)

II

These flowers, so fair and radiant to behold,
That open in the morning fresh and bright,
At evening shall be shorn of all delight,
Sleeping in night's embraces, close and cold.
Those streaming scarves of crimson and of gold,
The rainbow, with the hues of heaven bedight,
The symbol is of life that time shall blight;
So much a day's duration doth enfold!

The roses waken at the dawn to bloom,
And even as they flower they fade and die ;
Each tender bud a cradle is, and tomb.
So man perceives his own dark destiny ;
One day brings birth and death, promise and doom ;
Thus pass, like fleeting hours, the ages by.

Perhaps the best known of Calderon's plays is the very beautiful one called *La vida es sueño* (" Life is a Dream "), and I will give a synopsis, with some of the most famous lines of the play. I use the translation of Archbishop Trench, which follows the Spanish very closely both in metre and in rhyme, and I have abridged his admirable synopsis :

Basilius, King of Poland, though reputed childless, has a son whom he has been afraid to acknowledge, because the astrologers, casting the child's horoscope, had predicted that he would be fierce, ungovernable and cruel, and that Basilius himself should one day lie prostrate at his feet. Basilius has therefore kept his son, Sigismund, in chains in a remote tower, under the care of Clotaldo, a faithful servant.

Astolfo, Duke of Muscovy, though betrothed to Rosaura, has forsaken her, and wishes to wed his cousin, Estrella, niece of Basilius, to whom he is nephew. They are rival heirs, for the existence of Sigismund is unknown, and by this marriage both will gain the throne of Poland.

Act I. Rosaura attended by her servant, Clarin, has lost her way in the mountains. She is in search of the faithless Duke, Astolfo. She and Clarin are wandering at random, when they are attracted by a light in a tower, and approaching, they hear the clank of chains. They draw nearer, and listen to the lament of the captive Sigismund. He is bewailing his cruel fate, complaining that beast and bird and fish are free, and asking why he, alone, is a prisoner.

Ah ! miserable me, ah ! woe, woe, woe !
Heavens, why make ye me to mourn
More than all men else forlorn ?
If my birth has been my sin
Yet what sinned I more herein
Than others who were also born ?
Born the bird was, yet with gay
Gala vesture, beauty's dower,

Scarce it is a wingèd flower,
Or a richly-plumaged spray,
Ere the aërial halls of day
It divideth rapidly,
And no more will debtor be
To the nest it hastes to quit;
But with more of soul than it,
I am grudged its liberty.
And the beast was born, whose skin
Scarce those beauteous spots and bars,
Like to constellated stars,
Doth from its great Painter win,
Ere the instinct doth begin
Of its fierceness and its pride,
And its lair on every side
It has measured far and nigh,
While with better instinct, I
Am its liberty denied.
Born the mute fish was also,
Child of ooze and ocean weed;
Scarce a finny bark of speed
To the surface brought, and lo!
In vast circuits to and fro
Measures it on every side
All the waste of ocean wide,
Its illimitable home;
While with greater will to roam
I that freedom am denied.

(*Tr.* Archbishop Trench.)

An exclamation from Rosaura makes Sigismund aware that he has been overheard. His first impulse is to kill the intruders, but Rosaura throws herself at his feet and obtains forgiveness. At this instant Clotaldo, Sigismund's guardian, enters. By order of the King, anyone who approaches the place where his unhappy son is confined incurs the penalty of death. Clotaldo therefore summons the guards of the tower, and Rosaura and her attendant are taken into custody, in spite of Sigismund's remonstrance and rage.

The next scene opens in the palace of the Polish King. Basilius talks with Astolfo and Estrella, tells them of the existence of Sigismund, and explains the Prince's fateful horoscope, to account for his action in concealing him. Unfortunately for the two heirs-presumptive to the throne, the aged monarch has been seized

with remorse. He repents of his cruelty, and determines to set Sigismund at liberty. The King's plan is to bring his son to the palace and give him a chance to overcome the malignant influences of the stars. Should he succeed in doing this, he will be acknowledged as the heir to the throne. If Sigismund fails in the ordeal, he will be sent back to his dungeon, and the Duke and Estrella will inherit the kingdom.

Act II. The scene is still the palace, where Sigismund has been brought under the influence of a sleeping potion. This is part of the King's plan. If Sigismund does not pass successfully through the ordeal, he is to be taken back to the dungeon under the influence of a second potion, so that, awaking in his prison, he may be persuaded that all the pomp and glory with which for a brief moment he was surrounded were only a dream.

Sigismund awakes in the royal apartments. Clotaldo enters, and explains to the Prince that he is now heir to the Polish throne. Sigismund, recognising him as his former gaoler, turns upon him in a rage, and threatens to throw him from a window. Clotaldo flies for his life. The Duke (Astolfo) enters. Sigismund insults him, and he withdraws in anger. Estrella enters, and Sigismund pays her such violent compliments that the servants intervene, and she withdraws. Rosaura enters. She has been pardoned, and is now attached to Estrella's train. The Prince treats her with the same violence he showed to Estrella. Clotaldo, who has been watching events from a safe corner, comes to the rescue of Rosaura, and leads her away. Sigismund's rage at this second rebuff breaks all bounds; he attacks Clotaldo, and the latter's cries for help bring back the Duke. The King enters, and expostulates with his son. It is obvious that the Prince has failed in the ordeal, and must go back to his dungeon. The second potion is administered, and the next scene shows the tower, with Sigismund clothed in skins, and chained as before.

Act III. The people of the kingdom have learned that there is a rightful heir, and they resent any plan which gives the throne to another. There is an insurrection; the mob goes to Sigismund's dungeon, makes a forcible entry, frees him, and insists on his placing himself at the head of the rebel army. The Prince is completely bewildered by this new dream. To the shouts of "Long live Sigismund!" he answers:

> Must I dream again of glories
> (Is your pleasure so, high heavens)
> Oh, how soon to be dissolvèd?

Will you, that again encompassed
With those phantom shapes to mock me
I behold my kingly state
Of the winds dispersed and broken ?
Must I my sad lesson learn
Once again ? Again discover
To what perils mortal power
Lives its whole long life exposèd ?
No, it shall not, shall not be ;
To my destiny behold me
Subject now, and having learned
That this life a dream is, wholly,
Hence, I say, vain shapes, pretending
To possess a soul and body,
Cheating my dull sense, and having
In good truth nor one nor other !
I desire not borrowed greatness,
Pomps fantastical, illusions—
With the faintest breath that bloweth,
Of the light wind, perishing,
As the buds and blooms disclosèd
By the flow'ring almond tree
With such timeless haste unfolded
That the first breath dims their brightness,
Tarnishing and staining wholly
All the light and loveliness
Which its roseate tresses boasted.
And I know there falls no other
Lot to every one who dreams ;
Cheats avail with me no longer ;
Undeceived now know I surely
That our life a dream is only.

(*Tr.* Archbishop Trench.)

He yields, however, to their entreaties, places himself at the head of his army, and advances against the Polish capital. The armies join battle. The King is overthrown and his army scattered in flight. The aged monarch hides, but presently comes out from his concealment and throws himself at his son's feet. The menace of the stars is accomplished.

Sigismund is now overcome with contrition. He lifts Basilius from the ground, and throws himself at his father's feet. He has conquered his fate in reality, for he has conquered himself. The

Duke marries Rosaura and Sigismund gives his own hand to Estrella, saying that even though he should never wake to find himself in his dungeon again, yet Life itself is a Dream which he would fain dream well, so that a blessed awakening may follow.

I have only given a glimpse of the last of the great early Spanish poets. Lesser stars waxed and waned, but no new planet swims into our ken until the skies of the nineteenth century begin to brighten. The next two articles will deal with the poets of that later Golden Age.

ELLA CROSBY-HEATH.

"ONE NIGHT IN JUNE."

To the Editor of THE POETRY REVIEW.

SIR,—I read with due appreciation, certainly with much entertainment, Mr. Arthur Hood's clever parody of my *Night in June*, from the Prelude to the "Wayland–Dietrich Saga."

Firstly, I should like to thank him for his information that I am about to add "fine poetry to our advertisements." If I do, I shall be in excellent company, as bear witness the signatures on our Tube posters of some of the well-known artists of our day. Next, may I suggest that Mr. Hood owes me some small debt of gratitude in that I have supplied him with the material from which he has woven so witty a description of a lady's dress. I am lost in amazement at his apparently expert knowledge, and his intense interest—far greater than my own—in the mysteries of women's dress. Here I must frankly confess that I am puzzled. How is it that a man has this intimate knowledge—nay, such evident infatuation for this peculiarly feminine subject, that even in his sleep, if I read him aright, he dreams of dress? Ah! I have it. Can it be that Mr. Hood, by some remote possibility, some freak of fate, happens to be a "male modiste," a designer of the latest Paris creations? Yes—that must be it; and so absorbed in his business is he that he can think of nothing, see nothing, except in the terms of his trade. The glorious beauties of a sunset—which, I admit, are indescribable—suggest to his pre-occupied mind but a new fashion for a gown. Unhappy Mr. Hood, what an over-worked man he must be! I see him far above, on some lofty peak of Parnassus, sitting in judgment, and, in the intervals of feverishly designing new modes, flinging his thunderbolts on those who are audaciously attempting to scale the lower levels of that delectable mountain. As I begin the steep ascent, what can I do but bow my head before the blast, wrap myself close in my stormproof cloak of imperturbability and continue to climb?—I am, etc.,

KATHERINE M. BUCK.

THOMAS TRAHERNE: POET AND MYSTIC—III

BUT although Traherne is arresting in his "Infinite" mysticism, he is more so in the way in which he possessed the mystical aspects of men of later centuries. He was most akin to Blake, he was like Shelley, while he had sympathies with Wordsworth and Browning, Like Blake and Wordsworth he insisted on the value of the spiritual insight with which children are blessed when they first enter the world; and with Blake he held the same spiritual visions of Eternity. Thus Blake wrote:—

> To see a world in a grain of sand,
> And a Heav'n in a wild flower,
> Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
> And Eternity in an hour.

While Traherne a hundred years before said:—

> Suppose a river, or a drop of water, an apple, or a sand, an ear of corn, or an herb: God knoweth infinite excellencies in it more than we: He seeth how it relateth to angels and men: how it proceedeth from the most perfect Lover to the most perfectly Beloved; how it representeth all His attributes: how it conduceth in its place, by the best of means to the best of ends; and for this cause it cannot be beloved too much. God the Author and God the End is to be beloved in it; Angels and men are to be beloved in it, and it is highly to be esteemed for all their sakes.
>
> O what a treasure is every sand when truly understood!

Like Shelley, Traherne was so sensitive that he quickly came into touch with the living Spirit which both men knew pervaded nature, and both shared the belief in and the insight into the important part which love played in the universe and eternity. But it was in his philosophy and in his love for mankind that Traherne resembled Browning: both were optimistic souls believing in the good to come—Traherne was

> A happy soul that all the way
> To Heaven hath a summer's day

while Browning said of himself

> If I stoop
> Into a dark tremendous sea of cloud,
> It is but for a time ; I press God's lamp
> Close to my breast, its splendour soon or late
> Will pierce the gloom : I shall emerge one day.

Neither forgot their less fortunate fellows, but by believing in the good, which lies in every soul, they left mankind better and more hopeful, for both strove to raise man to spiritual heights by their continual message :—" Look thou not down but up ! "

IV. Form and Content.

Apart from his mysticism Traherne was great as a poet and as a writer of prose. He was a poet in his imagination, his love of nature, his magic of phrase and in his vitality and sustained enthusiasm. Many of his poems are truly lyrical ; many, especially *Love* and *Desire*, sung in spite of the thoughtful seriousness underlying them ; and in all there is a magic charm of phrasing :—

> Thoughts are the wings on which the Soul doth fly.
>
> The honey and the stings
> Of all that is are seated in a Thought,
> Even while it seemeth meek, and next to nought.
>
> Like bees they [thoughts] fly from flower to flower,
> Appear in every closet, temple, bower,
> And suck the sweet from thence
> No eye can see.

Living at the time he did, it was natural that he should be influenced by the metaphysical fashions then prevailing. But the conceits which this poet used were charming and original, and he did not draw them out to that extent of artificiality to which some of his contemporaries resorted. Thus God is " The Fountain " to him ; or he wrote thus of creation :—

When first Eternity stoop'd down to naught
And in the Earth its likeness sought,

or he pictured himself as Ganymede serving God, or imagined God's love to be a flowing stream of myrrh or incense, or thoughts to him were "angels which we send abroad." But Traherne did not allow metaphysical taste to master his individual style; he stood apart from the Metaphysical School because of his pulsing joy, convincing ardour and almost wild lyrical outbursts of song. He wrote with the same passion of devotion, adoration and love of God as Crashaw did of St. Theresa; he shared with Vaughan a deep, religious feeling for nature and childhood. But unlike any of them he did not carry his conceits to extremes nor did he possess their artifice and mastery of workmanship.

Traherne was defective in his methods of putting his ideas into metre. He piled up noun after noun and adjective after adjective as in *The Choice*. His rhymes were not always sound: he rhymed "state" with "create," "love" with "move," "are" with "care," "spoil" with "defile," and he continually, without variation, coupled "pleasures" with "treasures" and "joys" with "toys."

His stanzas, however, present great variety. Some are of six lines rhyming in couplets in alternate lines of six and ten syllables; some are larger—ten lines in a complicated rhyme as in *The Preparative*; while others are the essence of daintiness, as in *The Rapture*:—

Sweet Infancy!
O fire of heaven! O sacred Light!
How fair and bright,
How great am I,
Whom all the World doth magnify!

But because of his defective workmanship, Traherne's position amongst English poets has been and will be questioned. Yet he heard and wrote down the music of eternity with all the ardour of which his nature was capable; his thoughts were fresh from the Eternal, alive and passionate; and although he failed in workmanship,

although he ignored nearly all the laws of prosody, he is the English poet most nearly akin to Shelley in the ecstatic, impetuous rush of mind and verse.

In his prose, however, Traherne was a master of expression and he brought to it all his poetical thoughts and qualities. Fancy and insight play across each page in alternate light and shade, the one beautifying the other; meditation follows meditation without halt in his beauty of style and imagery and his convincing enthusiasm. At times his style recalls the quaintness of Sir Philip Sidney as in the following passage, which is full of rhythmic cadences :—

> As eagles are drawn by the scent of a carcase, as children are drawn together by the sight of a lion, as people flock to a coronation and as a man is drawn to his beloved object, so ought we. . . . As the stones were drawn to the building of Thebes by the melody of Amphion, as the hungry are drawn with the desire of a feast, and the pitiful drawn to a woeful spectacle, so ought we.

His argumentative passages are very persuasive and clear, especially that one beginning :—

> You are as prone to love as the sun is to shine, it being the most natural and delightful employment of the soul of man : without which you are dark and miserable. . . .

He exhibits, too, the same charm of phrasing—call it metaphysical who will—as he does in his poetry.

> Love is " the darling of God " but—
> Man is " the Darling of His bosom."

Love is " not like gold to be buried and concealed in darkness, but like the Sun to communicate itself wholly in its beams unto all."

" Love is a Phœnix that will revive in its own ashes, inherit death, and smell sweetly in the grave," while " Souls are God's jewels every one of which is worth so many worlds."

To conclude and sum up the importance of Traherne's position : although his prose and poetry are of value and are the main things by which he must be judged from a literary point of view, it is the charm of the man seen in his literary works which appeals so strongly and which

can be felt rather than reasoned about. He is further appreciated for the attitude which he took up towards men by assuming, and always taking into consideration, the good in them and pointing out the heights to which they might climb. But in all his writings Traherne was concerned with spiritual matters ; he was essentially the Sir Galahad of the seventeenth century, having his eyes fixed on the love of God even as the young knight fixed his on the Holy Grail without considering the material world. He was essentially a mystic : he had no wish to become great by his prose and poetry, which he regarded as instruments towards a spiritual end ; and it is as a mystic that he must finally be judged. Tennyson does this for us in his poem, *The Mystic*, and gives, as it were, the reason for Traherne's failure to influence his own age and afterwards :—

> Angels have talked with him, and showed him thrones :
> Ye knew him not : he was not one of ye . . .
> . . . . Ye were yet within
> The narrower circle ; he had well-nigh reached
> The last, which with a region of white flame,
> Pure without heat, into a larger air
> Upburning, and an ether of black blue,
> Investeth and ingirds all other lives.

Yet what matter judgment and influence, importance and fame, when his *Centuries of Meditation* and his poems still declare, although Traherne has been forgotten these many centuries, " The Omnipotence of God is His house, and Eternity His habitation " ?

A. DORIS L. WILSON.

* * * *

" Does Tennyson Wear ? " was answered most strongly in the affirmative at a meeting at Lincoln organised by the President of The Poetry Society to establish a Tennyson Room. Sir Herbert Warren's eloquent address and the other proceedings on a notable occasion deserve more than a passing note.

The Poetry Society will present a " poetry revue," organised by Miss Louie Bagley, with short poetic plays by Mr. John Drinkwater and Mr. W. B. Nichols, at an early date. Readers able to form parties for a most delightful and unique entertainment, in which old ballads will be presented in a new dress, are invited to notify the Hon. Director.

THE DYNAMICS OF AMERICAN POETRY—IX

HENRY VAN DYKE—JOHN JAY CHAPMAN—AMY LOWELL

FOR over forty years Dr. Henry Van Dyke has been foremost among those Americans "who speak the tongue that Shakespeare spake; the faith and morals hold which Milton held," carrying poetry with him and poetry carrying him. We find Dr. Van Dyke a scholar of the highest order, filling volumes with poetry while occupying the pulpit in most notable churches and holding professional chairs at Princeton, Harvard, Yale, Oxford, and other leading universities, and as United States Minister at the Hague.

Dr. Van Dyke has written many books on many compelling subjects, and poetry is to be found in all of them. The volumes of poetry include *The Builders and other Poems*, 1897; *Ships and Havens*, 1897; *The Toiling of Felix*, 1900; *The Poetry of the Psalms*, 1900; *The Blue Flower*, 1902; *Music and Other Poems*, 1904; *The White Bees and other Poems*, 1909; *Collected Poems, The Sad Shepherd, the Mansion*, 1911; *The Grand Canyon and other Poems*, 1914; *The Valley of Vision*, 1919. He has edited many collections, including *Select Poems of Tennyson, Little Masterpieces of English Poetry*, and *A Book of British and American Verse*. I wrote to Dr. Van Dyke asking his preference. He replied:

> When you ask a writer to select the things which he likes best in his own work, it is very much as if you asked a father to name the favourites among his children. One day, you know, one child may seem more lovely than the others; and the next day it may be a different child.
>
> However, I think it is only fair to say that the poem called *God of the Open Air* comes nearer to a full expression of my feelings about life and nature than any other single poem of mine. The brief *Songs Out of Doors* were the first of my verses to find great popularity, and some of them, like *The Veery, The Whip-poor-Will, The Song-Sparrow*, and *Sea-Gulls of Manhattan*, are dear to me because they came like birds, on their own wings. Among the narrative poems probably *The Toiling of Felix* made the widest

appeal and found readers all around the world. The poems which express patriotic feeling, like *Patria*, *The Name of France*, *Mare Liberum*, and *America for Me*, are written from the point of view of a man who is a peace lover, but not, however,—thank God,—a pacifist,—one who believes in friendship between kindred nations and loyalty to one's own country.

But there !—You can see how impossible it is to make the selection for which you ask. It seems to me that " poetry is the emotional interpretation of nature and life through the imagination, in musical language." That is my own definition, and I have tried to be true to it, though no doubt I have often failed, as we all do in our best endeavours. I have been somewhat of an experimenter in metrical form. Every form that is really metrical is in itself musical. Nothing that is unmusical belongs to poetry. But music is of many kinds, from that which belongs to the organ or the full orchestra, to that which comes from the shepherd boy in Palestine blowing his pipe among the hills.

My poems have been collected in one volume by Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, in 1920. Some of them which have particularly to do with the out-of-doors have been put into a booklet which I am asking the Scribners to send to you. You will find a short but far too favourable sketch of my life in a volume called *The Van Dyke Book*, issued by the same publishers. I am not a member of any poetical club, unless you think that the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the French Legion of Honour come under that description.

God of the Open Air expresses the majestic swing that characterises Dr. Van Dyke's poetry and prose. The first stanza follows :

Thou who hast made thy dwelling fair
With flowers below, above with starry lights
And set thine altars everywhere,—
On mountain heights,
In woodlands dim with many a dream,
In valleys bright with springs,
And on the curving capes of every stream :
Thou who hast taken to thy self the wings
Of morning, to abide
Upon the secret places of the sea,
And on far islands, where the tide
Visits the beauty of untrodden shores,
Waiting for worshippers to come to thee

In thy great out-of-doors!
To thee I turn, to thee I make my prayer,
God of the open air.

The Sea-Gulls of Manhattan, the "children of the elemental mother," brings us a haunting mirage of old New York, poetically vignetted in the modern city:

Here the high-built cities rise around you;
Here the cliffs that tower east and west,
Honeycombed with human habitations,
Have no hiding for the sea-bird's nest:
Here the river flows begrimed and troubled;
Here the hurrying, panting vessels fume,
Restless, up and down the watery highway,
While a thousand chimneys vomit gloom.

* * *

Even so the wild-woods of Manhattan
Saw your wheeling flocks of white and gray;
Even so you fluttered, followed, floated,
Round the Half-Moon creeping up the bay;
Even so your voices creaked and chattered,
Laughing shrilly o'er the tidal rips,
While your black and beady eyes were glistening
Round the sullen British prison-ships.

John Jay Chapman

Lawyer, playwright, poet, essayist, John Jay Chapman has been an effective force in American poetry during a span of years, a generation. It is significant that Mr. Chapman's first book, published in 1898, was *Emerson and Other Essays*. A number of other books from his pen include *Benedict Arnold*, a tragedy in verse for a Greek Theatre Homeric Scenes, a book of verse, and *Songs and Poems*; in addition to which are hundreds of essays, reviews and poems written for special occasions. These last are never perfunctory; none of Mr. Chapman's writings are. I first learned by experience during the World War that if Mr. Chapman accepts an invitation to speak he rewards the audience with original and most worthwhile contributions.

As chairman of a Patriotic Rally in 1915 I invited him to speak at Carnegie Hall. He came and stirred the audience with a poem written for the occasion, entitled *The Sword*. Always real, he has little use for those who act

> As if this universe were made of words
> And we a soul that chaos rocks to sleep.

He calls with a clarion voice and visions the destinies of nations and peoples—

> Behold the loom of life! The shuttle flies
> Inweaving every nation of the earth
> And binding every thread.

With equally broad sweep he treats poetry. He knows the poets of the ages and tells us that :—

The great poets of the world have generally been healthy-minded men. They may be cross, like Dante or Æschylus, or over-emotional like Keats, or extravagant like Hugo, or perverse like Byron, or a little too conscious of their mission like Goethe; but they are, on the whole, natures which are concentric with the rest of mankind. They develop their own various eccentricities and specialities according to their several artistic instincts. Each one knows what his strong point is, and writes accordingly.

Goethe was not himself in the least like his hero, Faust, nor was Byron like Manfred, nor Keats like Endymion, nor Tennyson like King Arthur, nor Browning like Bishop Bloughram. Indeed, the art of writing, like the other arts, consists of issuing something that will walk on its own feet, something to which the writer says, "Run along, now! You'll do: that's the idea." Thus the tortured heroes of romantic poetry and fiction, who exhibit their world-sadness and disillusionment, are not real persons, but are stalking horses invented by healthy-minded men of genius in order to solace the cravings of sentimental persons and to make the tears of the public flow luxuriously.

But Poe, like Leopardi, was really and truly an afflicted being, a real Faust, a real Manfred, a real Hamlet. There was a seam or seared place somewhere in his brain that would not mend and could not be appeased or satisfied. This man's sufferings were sincere and terrible— not the yearnings of a Werther or of a Rolla; and thus Poe's place in literature is somewhat like that of a real man upon the stage of a theatre. His work does not coalesce with its apparent literary congeners.

People talk about Shelley as a creature who has "wandered in from another planet," and so on. But Shelley was a careful and only too prolific artist who knew his own style exceedingly well; and (but that he seems to have been rather deficient in a capacity for suffering) he was a fairly healthy spirit. His melancholy is poetic melancholy—rather an agreeable experience. Poe, on the other hand, was an unhappy being, and could not find out why he was unhappy.

A profound scholar, he lives with the poets of yesteryear, with the "poems of all ages." As he expresses in *Books and Reading*:—

> These journals, notes, and missives of the dead—
> These poems of all ages—form a kind
> Of ever fresh ambrosia for the mind;
> And we like half-gods, as it were, cloud-fed
> On song and thought and parable, break bread
> With all the wits and poets of mankind,
> Who look on life and left their souls behind
> With ours immortally companioned.
>
> Rather than honours, riches, and renown—
> By heaven, I'd rather be like one of those!—
> One who in thought so close enwrapped himself
> As to live penniless and die unknown,
> Leaving no record of his joys or woes,
> Save a small volume on the scholar's shelf.

In a letter regarding his own poetry Mr. Chapman very aptly stated that poetry is "a barrier-breaking exercise that most literary men take to out of instinct."

Amy Lowell

A descendant of James Russell Lowell, and member of one of the original American families whose literary achievements have given a distinguishing touch to American letters, Miss Amy Lowell has a double claim as a force in American poetry. Each of her published works, from *A Dome of Many-Coloured Glass* to her monumental Keats biography, has been a surprise and a distinctive addition to American literature.

Her biography of Keats came early in 1925, when the

literary world had concluded that she was the leader of the *vers libre* school, and raised anew the question of classification often raised by her exceptional ability to write sonnets conforming strictly to the classic form as well as *vers libre.* Her published works also include numerous contributions to periodicals, distinguished by their dynamic qualities.

I asked Miss Lowell to state which of her poems she prefers, and she answered she could not tell, so I shall select from the many that appeal to me especially for their dynamic qualities. Here are lines from *The Book of Stones and Lilies* :—

I read a book
With a golden name,
Written in blood,
On a leaf of flame.

* * *

I saw blue wings
In a beat of fire,
My hands clutched the feathers
Of all desire.

I cried for hammers,
For a hand of brass,
But my soul was hot
As melted glass.

Then the bright, bright words,
All clothed in white,
Stood in the circle of the silver night.
And sang :
" Energy is Eternal Delight.
Energy is the only life."

And my sinews were like bands of brass,
And the glass of my soul hardened and shone
With all fires, and I sought the ripeness of sacrifice
Across the dew and the gold of a young day.

In Miss Lowell's *Keats* she has given to both Poetry and History a fine contribution, without conceit or cant and in the true spirit of setting forth another. The two splendid volumes that comprise it stir one to compliment

of the manner of her doing and the time and persisting impulse that must have carried her to so complete a picture of John Keats. In a much earlier book Miss Lowell strikes, in a *Sonnet to John Keats*, her lyre in his honour. The first line reads :—

> Great master! Boyish, sympathetic man!

And, further, in the poem *Suggested by the Cover of a Volume of Keats' Poems* :—

> Wild little bird, who chose thee for a sign
> To put upon the cover of this book?
> * * *
> For this they took thee, little bird, for this
> They captured thee, lilting among the leaves,
> And stamped thee for a symbol on this book.
> For it contains a song surpassing thine,
> Richer, more sweet, more poignant. And the poet
> Who felt this burning beauty, and whose heart
> Was full of lovelier things, sang all he knew
> A little while, and then he died, too frail
> To bear this untamed passionate burst of song.

Beautiful is *Fatigue*, from the same volume :—

> Stupefy my heart to every day's monotony,
> Seal up my eyes, I would not look so far,
> Chasten my steps to peaceful regularity,
> Bow down my head lest I behold a star.
>
> Fill my days with work, a thousand calm necessities
> Leaving no moment to consecrate to hope,
> Girdle my thoughts within the dual circumferences
> Of facts which form the actual in one short hour's scope.
>
> Give me dreamless sleep, and loose night's power over me,
> Shut my eyes to sounds only tumultuous then,
> Bid fancy slumber and steal away its potency
> Or Nature wakes and strives to live again.
>
> Let each day pass well ordered in its usefulness,
> Unlit by sunshine, unscarred by storm;
> Dower me with strength and curb all foolish eagerness—
> The law exacts obedience. Instruct, I will conform.

Miss Lowell's definition of Poetry, in her poem *Fragment*, we cannot pass by :—

> What is poetry ? Is it a mosaic
> Of coloured stones which curiously are wrought
> Into a pattern ? Rather glass that's taught
> By patient labour any hue to take
> And glowing with a sumptuous splendor, make
> Beauty a thing of air where sun-beams caught
> Transmuted fall in shapes of rainbows fraught
> With storied meaning for religion's sake.

The following sonnet, *The Lamp of Life*, illustrates how complete a master Miss Lowell is of this difficult form :—

> Always we are following a light
> Always the light recedes : with groping hands
> We stretch toward this glory while the lands
> We journey through are hidden from our sight
> Dim and mysterious, folded deep in night,
> We care not, all our utmost need demands
> Is but the light, the light ! So still it stands
> Surely our own if we exert our might.
>
> Fool ! Never can'st thou grasp this flashing gleam,
> Its glowing flame would die if it were caught,
> Its value is that it doth always seem
> But just a little farther on. Distraught,
> But lighted ever onward, we are brought
> Upon our way unknowing, in a dream.

The following six lines are the sestette from *The Poet* :—

> With simple joys and quiet happiness
> He guards the vision of the sunset sky.
> Though faint with weariness he must possess
> Some fragment of the sunset's majesty,
> He spurns life's human friendships to profess
> Life's loneliness of dreaming ecstasy.

In appreciation of the difficulties in capturing a sonnet Miss Lowell writes :—

> You ask me for a sonnet. Ah, my dear,
> Can clocks tick back to yesterday at noon ?
> Can cracked and fallen leaves recall last June ?

Very characteristic is *The Bungler* from *Sword Blades and Poppy Seed* (1914, Macmillan) :—

You glow in my heart
Like the flame of uncounted candles,
But when I go to warm my hands
My clumsiness overturns the light
And then I stumble
Against the tables and chairs.

In *Men, Women and Ghosts* (Macmillan, 1916) the reader finds vivid short-line pictures of life's daily experiences, vivid and contagious in their zest and colour.

The art attitudes of China and Japan have engrossed Miss Lowell and enlisted her genius. She has given distinct and brilliant expression of her reaction to their beauties. In the second volume of *John Keats* she gives a fine delineation of the poet, as follows :—

The poet differs from the "poetic" person in just this power to lose himself in his creations. The poetic person is a sentimentalist, he refers all things to himself and finds them of importance in proportion to the sensations they arouse in him; the poet is concerned with his creations for themselves, and forgets his own personality in the effort to imbue them with such as are proper to his conception of them.

ALICE HUNT BARTLETT.

* * * *

The Monday afternoon "readings" at the Savoy Chapel are being continued during May by Capt. Foxcroft, M.P. (4th), the Editor of THE POETRY REVIEW (11th), the Lord Gorell (18th), and Miss K. M. Buck and Miss Dora Silberrad (25th). At the "Wayland-Dietrich Saga" reading a souvenir volume of the Saga will be presented to the audience by the publisher, Mr. A. H. Mayhew. Details of further arrangements and reservation of seats may be obtained from the General Secretary of The Poetry Society.

Any reader wishing to attend the verse speaking examinations at the University of London, South Kensington, on June 13th and July 4th should apply to the General Secretary of The Poetry Society, 16, Featherstone Buildings, W.C.1, from whom also may be obtained invitations to the occasional causeries of the Verse Writers' Centre, THE POETRY REVIEW and P. T. Contributors' Club.

Details and conditions of the Young People's Verse Contests, which are now a regular feature of THE POETRY REVIEW, will be found on p. 140.

INDIA—Entertaining Twilight

[This characteristic poem can almost be said to constitute in itself an epitome of Indian life. It hints at Indian history, geography, religion, mythology, and the life, art and characteristics of the people of both ancient and modern rustic India. It appeals, by reason of its atmosphere of twilight and night, to the dreamy, mystic side of the Indian mind; and by its realistic description of such parts of everyday life as cooking and smoking, to the realistic, matter-of-fact side of his mind. It is, in fact, essentially Indian, both in outlook and form, yet its technique, its rhymes and rhythm, are in accord with the traditions of English poetry.—Ed.]

TO India's comely cottage Twilight hied:
"Salam, my lass!" resplendent Twilight cried:
"A sumptuous fare prepare! . . . since noon I tried
To come this way . . . but ah! The glowing day did stay
With thee! . . . Fresh milk and fried chapatis bring
And not forget thy hubble-bubble, dear,
For lots of dreamy cheer!
From out thy hair the withered lily fling;
Don fine array, with pearls thy tresses lay, and play
Thy vena, dance and sing!
One stolen hour is mine; that little while
With haunting notes of suri-raag beguile . . .
And let me see thy flaming eyes, as thunder skies
So deep and dark, with mystic lightnings bright;
With 'Duhals' wake what slumbering lies, the past let rise
All yesterdays to pageant gay, invite . . .
Be swift, my sweet!
The meat and chutney let us eat . . .
The hour, my sweet,
Is fleet; from night I must retreat!
Already muezzin's mellow call resounds in mango grove;
And temple bells, that wake the gods, the hearts to worship move;
Come hither, dear! . . . The moments flee!
Salam, my love,
Salam!"

And India, sun-burnt India, sweetly blushed;
"Salam! I'll hasten!" answered she; and brushed
From off her braid the faded lily—crushed
By day's embrace; she sped, with joy, her face a-blaze,
To milk the goats, to fry the cakes in ghee;
Cabob, pullau, the dates and honey brought
And hubble-bubble sought

With smiles of Sindian hospitality.
With peri-grace she soared about the place, to trace
Each thing that added glee
To Twilight's hour . . . a rich repast she spread
Before her guest, who sliced the mangoes red
'Neath palms, beside the well and stream . . . his eyes a-gleam
With dusk, he watched where night in forests hid
And vexed with prying silver beam, his crimson dream
While India, humming low, her braids undid.
With rustling sound
Unbound, her tresses sought the ground;
With silvery sound
She wound her pearls in orient found . . .
Her silk-apparel Jasmin-decked, kissed rugs of golden cloth;
With henna'd hands she swirled her veil, as frail as wings of moth;
Her vena struck, with bended knee:
"Salam," she quoth:
"Salam!"

She shot as lightning up . . . then paused and smiled;
Then round she spun in trance, as dervish wild;—
In rain-bow hue she flew, with flowers piled;
A flame a-whirl, with passion red, each curl a-twirl,
As Indra's temple-dancer, maddening hearts
Her lips with kisses scarlet!—Eyes a-glow
Now moved she sly and slow
As Punjab tigress ere for prey she starts . . .
Then did unfurl a smock as white as pearl . . . a girl
Of pious Southern parts
She turned, gazellean-soft and meek her glance,
The rosary and censer graced her dance;
A fragrant bud of womanhood, divinely good;
But soon her measure ceased . . . with rhythmic thrill
In Delhi's wealth arrayed she stood, in soaring mood
Then danced again, to show her perfect skill!—
With flourish bold
And gold a-flash, now anklets told,
Her footsteps bold
Controlled a battle march of old!
She forward dashed as amazon of Rajput's desert side,
Her eyes with valour all a-flame, so proudly did she stride:
"Wah! Wah!" So Twilight cheered . . . and she:
"Salam," replied:
"Salam!"

Her Jadoo-veil now changed the scene . . . and lo !
In clouds she danced thro' Kashmeer's mountain snow,
Thro' jungle glooms and tombs of gold below ;—
By Ganges led, where orchards blossoms shed, she sped
'Mid Koels as Gopi, or as Rama's queen . . .
With shimmering ivory limbs, and rubied brow
As Moghul princess now
She sat 'mid slaves on throne of Jasper sheen.—
Now made her bed on elephant's broad head, and fled
As Jin thro' plantains green.—
Then rose as butterfly from out her shawl
All poised o'er lucid lakes of Taj Mahal.—
The hour had slipped, and night at last approached so fast ;
And Twilight donned his turban, chilled with fright . . .
The hookah-stick, he dropped aghast, and India cast
Her jewelled slipper at her guardian Night
Who gently sailed,
And trailed the stars . . . but Twilight quailed
And westward sailed !
All veiled in mists he drooped and paled !—
Her lacquered cradle India spread for moon-lit night to rest ;
Namaskar made with folded hands ! . . . half serious, half a-jest
She fibbered : " Twilight hit at thee . . .
Salam, my best
Salam ! "

Khairpur Mirs. ELSA KAZI.
29th October, 1924.

" Chapatis "—Unleavened wheaten cakes.
" Vena "—String instrument.
" Suri-raag "—Key-melody to be sung between 4 and 8 p.m.
" Duhals "—Drums. " Chutney "—Pickles.
" Muezzin "—Man who calls from minaret for prayer.
" Cabob "—Baked mincemeat.
" Pullau "—Dish of chicken with rice and dried fruits.
" Peri "—A Fairy.
" Wah ! Wah ! "—An acclamation of praise.
" Jadoo "—Magic. " Koel "—Indian cuckoo.
" Gopi "—Attendant nymph of Krishna.
" Rama "—Incarnated deity of Hindus.
" Jin "—Genii.
" Namaskar "—Form of salute or adoration.

THE MESSAGE OF THE HINDU STAGE

Explained for "Poetry Review" readers by Rabindranath Tagore. (Translated from the original Bengali by Basanta Koomar Roy, author of *Rabindranath Tagore: The Man and His Poetry*.)

THE *Natyashastra of Bharata* is the standard work on Hindu drama. Bharat describes the stage in this book; but there is not to be found even the faintest reference to settings and scenery. It seems to me that drama does not suffer in the least by the absence of concrete scenery on the stage. The fine arts are morbidly jealous of one another. Each art shines the purest in its innate effulgent glory when it is absolutely and completely free from the presence of a rival art. As a faithful wife never casts wistful glances on other men, even so the muse of poetry smiles the sweetest only in the company of the imaginative.

We all act within ourselves when we read a play. If this mental acting fails to unfold the beauty of dramatic poetry, then that dramatist does not deserve any consideration. The drama that has to sell its soul to be congenial to the skill of the actor naturally meets with contempt. The art of acting must of necessity be somewhat dependent on the beauty of poetry in the play. But why should acting bow its head to other arts? To be consistent with its own sense of self-respect it can acknowledge only that much dependence on other arts that is absolutely necessary for its fullest expression. To do anything more is to degrade itself.

The words of the poet are absolutely necessary for the actor. He has to laugh with the words of laughter woven by the poet; if the poet is kind enough to offer him a little leisure for weeping, he weeps to draw tears in the eyes of the audience. But why, why pictures that idly hang behind the actor? He does not create them on the stage. They were painted by the painter according to his conception of things. The actor has nothing to do with them. They only obstruct the blossoming of his creative genius. No doubt with the borrowed help of the painter he thus fraudulently shirks his own responsibility by creating a false illusion on the minds of the audience. This only proves his own incompetence and cowardice.

The actor is not supposed to stand in a witness-box in a court-room, so that every word he utters has to be sanctified with a solemn oath. Then why such elaborate scenic preparations to cheat the spectator that has come to enjoy the play with abundance of faith in his heart. He has not left his imagination at home under lock and key! There is a subtle friendly understanding between the audience and the actor that their respective imaginations voluntarily co-operate for the proper understanding of the play. It is not difficult for a

normal person to imagine a cottage, a couple of trees or a river on the stage. To try to help us with a few painted canvas hangings is to question the sanity of our minds.

That is the reason why I like our village jatra plays so much. The gulf between the actor and the audience is most simply and soulfully bridged in these open-air plays without settings and scenery. There is such an exuberance of confidence on both the sides that the purpose of the poet is most sympathetically attained. By dint of sheer sincere acting poetry is made to dance out of a fountain of beauty and enrapture the entire being of the spectator.

There is an invisible stage in the mind of the audience. Enchanted scenery is constantly being automatically painted there by the magic touch of imagination. That stage and that scenery are the goals that the true dramatist seeks to reach. No artificial stage and no artificial scenery can be worthy of the fancy of the poet.

In the West the audience demands concrete presentation of the things mentioned in the play. It is afraid to take chances with imagination. It naturally makes a compromise in its willingness to imagine a mountain on the stage, but a picture of the mountain must, by all means, be furnished in the settings. So tremendous amounts of money have to be wasted for the production of scenic effects—for mere child's play.

The theatre we have set up in India to-day in imitation of the Western stage is a cumbersome and swollen monstrosity. It is a costly affair. So it is not accessible to all. The barbarous display of wealth by the producer crushes the refinement of the genius of the poet. If the Hindu spectator has not yet been vitiated beyond redemption by Western scenic aberrations on the stage; and if the Hindu actor has any genuine respect for his own art and for poetry; then it is high time for them to rise in a righteous revolt against this devastating innovation, and simply sweep aside the costly and unnecessary scenic rubbish that contaminates and smothers our stage to-day.

* * * *

Kensington Centre Meetings.—May 14th, Mr. Sturge Moore, "Taste in Poetry," 9, Sumner Place, S.W.7; May 28th, a substitute for Miss Amy Lowell, who is prevented by illness from coming to England; on May 28th, Miss Rolt Wheeler, "Open Sesame," 24, Ladbroke Road; June 11th, Mr. E. V. Knox (E.V.O.E.), "Verses and Parodies," 9, Melbury Road, Kensington; June 25th, Miss Sybil Bristowe, "Words—Words—Words," 122, Sutherland Avenue, Maida Hill, W.9; July 9th, Mrs. Mends-Gibson, "Walt Whitman," 4, Cranley Place, S.W.7.

NEW LAMPS FOR OLD.*

WE still hear sometimes the cry of "New Lamps for Old," but we are rather chary of bargaining and are afraid to lose possession of old treasures. Yet it is well to examine the proffered wares. Mr. Brookes More has "done into English verse" the first three books of Ovid's *Metamorphoses.** He treats his themes in a dignified manner and his handling of the wonderful metaphors and similes is musical as well as faithful to the original text. His adoption of the medium of blank verse saves him from the pitfalls of forced rhymes and strained inversions, but this path of least resistance also bars him from framing some of those grand couplets that cut so clear a picture and have such a retentive power over the memory.

The difficulties and advantages of both forms are well compared by reading together two versions of a passage taken from the story of Aglauros. Athene seeks out Envy in her dismal cave. Mr. Brookes More describes the hag thus :—

> "Her face is pale, her body long and lean,
> Her shifting eyes glance to the left and right,
> Her snaggle teeth are covered with black rust,
> Her hanging paps o'erflow with bitter gall,
> Her slavered tongue drips venom to the ground;
> Busy in schemes and watchful in dark snares
> Sweet sleep is banished from her bloodshot eyes;
> Her smiles are only seen when others weep;
> With sorrow she discerns the fortunate,
> And pines away as she beholds their joy;
> Her own existence is her punishment,
> And while tormenting she torments herself."

Addison, in heroic couplets :—

> "Livid and meagre were her looks, her eye
> In foul distorted glances turned awry;
> A hoard of gall her inward parts possessed,
> And spread a greenness o'er her cankered breast;
> Her teeth were brown with rust, and from her tongue,
> In dangling drops, the stringy poison hung;
> She never smiles but when the wretched weep,
> Nor lulls her malice with a moment's sleep;

* *Ovid's Metamorphoses.* Book I, and Books II and III, done into English Verse by Brookes More; *The Ring of Love*, by Brookes More. Illustrated by Tracey Porter Rudd and Lewis Perry (Cornhill Publishing Co., Boston). $4.50.

Restless in spite, while watchful to destroy,
She pines and sickens at another's joy;
Foe to herself, distressing and distress'd,
She bears her own tormentor in her breast."

Those final epigrammatic lines are very hard to surpass.

In *The Ring of Love* we have quite another aspect of Mr. More's poetry. The collection of poems falling under this heading fill a quarter of the book and are further entitled *A Lyric Sequence*. Perhaps it is because I confess to a prejudice against the particular type of metre used in this sequence that the poems captivate neither my ear nor my heart. Canto XIX seems the best to quote from :—

"We used to speak of Angels
And worship them in prayer;
We pictured them in radiance,
Beheld them everywhere.

. . . .

Those days are gone for ever; . . .
Faith first is lost in doubt,
Then doubt is lost in wonders
Invention ferrets out."

The next section is termed *Patterns for Poets* and gives original samples of every form of verse known, from the Triolet and Sonnet to the intricate Sestina and Pantoum. Regarded as samples of structure they are most illuminating, but as gems of poesy they often fail sadly. In the Rondeau we are given "Sallie slapped me" as the keynote and refrain. The author tells us, "A rondeau is a useful form to concentrate the mind of the reader on some particular phrase or idea." This is very true, but there are more inspiring phrases to concentrate upon than "Sallie slapped me"! To the writer who wishes to experiment in all kinds of verse forms this section should be a useful guide.

The last part of the volume is devoted to *The Lover's Rosary*, which is a sonnet sequence with an original connecting link. The final rhyme of each sextet is used again as the first rhyme of the next octet. Some of the sonnets are striking. No. XLI gives a vivid picture of the anchorite in his cell . . . "His life is death before his flesh has died."

Mr. More has deft fingers when he models small live things, and he devotes some particularly good lines to describe toad, lizard, spider, mantis and bee :—

"... the speckled toad, ordained to dote
Upon the silent Moon, from squatting knees
Peers upward." ...

"The lazy lizard blinks his beady eyes."

"The wily insect has prepared her net,
Invisible, fine, sparkling with the wet
Round jewels of the dawn, as if to mock
The fairy fringes of Titania's frock."

"The Praying Mantis, his long arms addrest
In adoration, seems to supplicate
God's blessing; but ferocity, innate,
Lurks hidden in his hypocritic breast."

"For, though each morning ... when the sun awakes
The drowsy world again to diligence ...
Brings her that closer to eternal night,
She fails not, as the moments go, but takes
Rich toll of life. ..."

The publishers have spared no pains to make these volumes beautiful to handle and to look upon, and the two illustrators have added their quota to the general artistry. Perhaps they err in over-elaborateness, whereas many English verse books are spoiled by careless presentation—poor type, badly printed, with atrocious binding—the poor authors being damned before they're read.

EVELYN D. BANGAY.

* * * *

The Golden Galleon tells us that Theodore Roosevelt liked Poe, thought Longfellow underestimated, enjoyed the rhythms of Swinburne, and delighted in Kipling, many of whose poems he memorised and taught his children. Of the fifty-nine or so books which comprised the famous "Pigskin Library" for his African trip, some nineteen of them were volumes of poetry, *The Iliad*, *The Odyssey*, *Emerson's Poems*, Longfellow, Tennyson, Shakespeare, Keats, Milton, Browning, Shelley, Poe, Dante, Bret Harte's *Poems*, *Percy's Reliques*, Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, etc. Another American President, James Garfield, said "The world's history is a divine poem, and many of those who have helped to make the world's history have been cheered in their tasks by poetry."

DANTE, DAY, DARLING AND COMPANY.

DEVOTEES of Dante will appreciate Richard Edwin Day's *Sonnet Sequence* (Yale University Press and H. Milford, 5s.). Each stanza is a well-wrought argument, some dealing with the history of Dante's life and others inspired by lines from the *Vita Nuova* and the *Divina Commedia*. The affection of the writer himself for "the much-enduring" Florentine is best shown in such lines as:

> Then did the angel of Misfortune trace
> Majesty which invites not nor repels,
> Set in the lines of that world-wearied face,
> Sternness such as none other parallels,
> And tenderness that hath such piteous grace
> As sometimes in the eyes of mothers dwells.
>
> * * *
>
> At Duino by Trieste for awhile,
> That life that was so like a wandering ship . . .
> His Simile . . . an anchorage did grip;
> The citadel had wherewith to beguile.
> The surf that dashed against the rocky pile,
> The fishing birds that brushed the grey sea's lip,
> The fishing boats that danced with swing and dip,
> Each wooed his spirit with a harmless wile.

The lyric and classic poems in the same volume bear witness to a sea-tuned ear, a very human heart, a brave philosophy and a masterful technique on the part of the author, especially in such poems as *The Cave*, a poem written to the memory of *Wolcott Balestier*, *The Heart of Youth*, and *The Furies to Alcmaeon*. *Kelp* typifies many of these qualities:

> Flung on the beach or the clift,
> From the spent tide's casual drift,
> Its brown leaf doth flutter and lift,
> Which once in the under-sea glade
> Did shrink from the oar's broad blade.
>
> Yet it clasps 'mid the roar of the swell
> The pink-hued pebble or shell;
> And I count that a life ends well,
> If it have in its keep at last
> Some loveliness held fast.

Though perhaps the key-note to Mr. Day's faith is given in the little problem, asked so straightly and answered so simply in *The Heart of Youth*, which begins:

" Oh ! wherefore should the heart of youth,
Its foolish heart, be kept alive,
Which neither time nor pain endu'th
With any wisdom but to strive ? "

It takes no lesson from defeat,
But sees its daring schemes reversed,
And smiles upon the last deceit
As valiantly as on the first.

and ends with :

It hopes to make the misery less,
And wonders at the tears of men ;
Somehow its pity cannot guess
That these shall flow and flow again.

Ah ! therefore should the heart of youth,
Its foolish heart, be kept alive,
Which neither time or pain endu'th
With any wisdom but to strive.

Lord Darling introduces the members of the Scratch Society (*Ventures in Verse*, Stockwell, 2s.) in a few explanatory sentences, and he concludes with these words : " The war has not left the children of this day altogether untouched," a truth that is certainly verified in this meritorious little collection of verse. All the writers have something to say and some say it remarkably well. The contributions that bear the clearest stamp of individuality are : *To a Shaft of Sunlight* (Diana Darling), *London Lovers* (Joyce Anstruther), *Through the Woods* (Katherine Bacon), *To Those Who Fought* (Janet Vesey), *On Earth* (Joan Maurice), *Exile* (Audrey Wrangham).

To quote but a single specimen seems invidious, but Space is a mistress who is very niggardly with her favours ! I choose the last named :

" How can you understand our loneliness
Who are in everything so intimate ?
Or what is Solitude to you unless
You have sighed, as we, grown inarticulate
Behind a wall that was not of our making,
Where speech and song and laughter suffered change,
Where we were bound with fetters past our breaking,
And all things most familiar grew most strange ?
Incomprehensible ! You would not think

That English tunes, low hummed, were bitter sweet,
That English papers, smelling of printers' ink,
Brought back the noise and hurry of the "Street";
We learnt, all else denied, the joy it brings
To hold communion with the least of things."

The Lost Road and Other Sketches by Kathleen Simmonds (Stockwell, 2s. 6d.), that are so delicately and yet so definitely drawn, deal with a variety of themes: with the Pipes of Pan, and with other music, not of his making; with Romance that is to be found everywhere, even in the rain; with the call of the Future; and with the glamour that is of the Past and still lives in old mediæval cities. Rye is re-pictured in a few lines:

"It was a city once, and the dreams were realities. Grass grows now in the cobbled streets with the lovely names—Mermaid Street, Watchbell Street, Strand—but knights came clattering down them once, and sturdy seamen drank right heartily at the Mermaid or the Ship before they went out to smash the French in the narrow seas." There is a charming description, too, of a garden of daffodils: "You meet them first in sedate rows . . . so far as a daffodil can ever been said to achieve sedateness . . . along the drive and around the border; a little farther on they have broken loose and are standing about in sociable groups; but down by the pond they are dancing . . . dancing up the bank, under the trees, down to the very water's edge."

Babies and Fairies ends with a delightful whimsey: "There are fairies in heaven," said a child once . . . Who knows? . . . And since One came from there Who loved little children . . . Who took them up on His knees and told them stories . . . Is it too much to imagine that, sometimes, He told them Fairy Tales?" Another charming point is the way in which relevant and endeared fragments of verse are interposed among the writer's own thoughts. This book, too, is a first venture; it deserves a fair fortune.

Transmutation and other Poems, by H. Phelps Clawson (E. Mathews), show what so much verse of this type lacks, restraint. By some pens the almost unvaried length of line would become monotonous, but the vigour of the imagery and easy fluency of the writing prevent this from being felt. Nevertheless, the spontaneous and broken metre used for *The Wind* at the end of the book is very refreshing and blows away any vestige of cobwebs. In *Here and Yonder* (E. Mathews) and *Toward the Light* (Arrowsmith) one cannot doubt the sincerity of feeling, but misses the virtue of restraint. Mr. W. Robert Hall is really the most effective in his Tramp poems, and

in the second volume are to be found some helpful truisms, such as "Transient pleasures lose the pearl of price." Often Miss Woodcock's heart runs away with her hand, but *Primroses* is charmingly fresh. Mr. O'Connor Duffy is decidedly at his best when he sings strictly of his *Little Town* (Stockwell). *Courier* and *On the Hill* are place poems of real value. *In the Park*, despite its travestied title, is a poignant piece of writing, expressing true heartache. Pictures are generally the bigger half of a book to children and grown-ups will share their appreciation in this instance, for *Dormer Windows* (Blackwell) is most delightfully illustrated by Mildred R. Lamb. The titles of the poems are very attractive, too, and the print and morals drawn excellent. Nowadays children are brought up in such an out-in-the-open atmosphere that *What the Trees Say*, *The Song of the Brook* and *An Outside Nursery* are likely to make a strong appeal to little folk, beside being the best wrought poems in the book.

E. D. B.

THE DREAMERS

WE who lie in the sun by day, and dream,
Think not at all of night ; or if the thought
Wander into our ken, when the last beam
Of sunlight strikes on our lids, it is unsought.

It comes like a vague terror, and is fled ;
The sun still brown and warm upon our throats ;
Dawn might it be, but that our hope is dead,
And dread flits to and fro in the golden motes.

When evening comes, there is an end to day ;
The day, the dream, is done, and we arise
Sullen and proud, and stretch our limbs. We say
"This is the end, when hope, and the warm sun, dies."

Bitter is night, when the most distant stars
Strike pain into the soul and high updraw
Roots of our being upon their tremulous bars ;
We turn on wheels of agony and awe,

But proudly still into the night step forth,
Made young again, though old as night is old ;
We turn the breast from sunset to the North,
Mourn in our silent hearts, and breathe the cold.

EDWARD STEESE.

THE ART OF CONDENSED VERSE.

TAKAHITO IWAI has compressed between the covers of his *Cherry Leaves* (Erskine MacDonald, Ltd., London) some poems of unusual charm and originality. Occasionally his themes suggest Chinese parallels; but if so, he has made them peculiarly his own through a refinement of adoption and a broadened perspective which give new meaning. After reading the first poem in the volume:

> "The stars reflect on sluggish Thames
> Their message to a stranger;
> But many thousand miles away
> The stars reflect on Tamagawa's swirl
> Another message to a girl,
> Who, it may be, waits and dreams
> That Heaven looks down on all, and soothes
> The souls that linger by the starlit Thames"—

one may recall faint echoes of that ancient Chinese ballad of the fourth century:

> "There is Somebody of whom I am thinking.
> Far away there is Somebody of whom I am thinking.
> A hundred leagues of mountains lie between us:
> Yet the same moon shines upon us, and the passing
> Wind breathes upon us both"—

and say, with Yone Noguchi:

> "A breeze forgotten by life,
> Steps from thought to thought."

Oye no Chizato, a celebrated and an honoured poet of old Japan, has said:

> "To gaze upon the moon
> Is to be sad in a thousand ways,"

and there is a Chinese legend of an old philosopher, meditating in the cool of the evening, who climbed the silver ladder of a moonbeam to the wonder and the glory of the moon, but returned to earth, "drawn back by the remembrance of familiar things, for dearer even than perfection is that to which the heart is accustomed." The insistent present never wholly escapes from the dominant past, but time and space are one to those symbols of infinity—the stars and the moon. Another quality is revealed in Mr. Iwai's poem, *Hyde Park at Eve*:

> "Here where the twilight gleams, I have my dreams—
> The new-grown grass to rest me—

One haunting thought to test me—
What if thou yearnest to reach again
The Mother Earth, that gave thee birth ;
To drain her milk, thou soft green silk ?
But I, who stretch my hand, and strive to understand,
Can only falter, knowing naught
Of all the wonder thou hast caught,"

reminiscent of the sweetness, the patience and the sorrow of the blind plaintively seeking for something for ever denied. One is tempted to quote, in response, the *hokku* of Sadakichi Hartmann :

" White petals afloat
On a winding woodland stream—
What else is life's dream ? "

In quite another mood and key is *A Pretty Typist* :

" A pretty girl among the crowd of typists
Always gave me a sweet smile.
I did not see her for a whole day,
And I had a sense of something missing,
As if I had left my watch at home,"

with a revelation in the last line that almost prompts a re-reading of the whole.

Many of these poems are impressionistic, yet interpretative, etchings ; differing in all but their freshness. *Winter Dawn on Ontario* presents an example :

" Dawn swept over Lake Ontario,
And with a rain of creamy snow
Knocked at every window in Toronto,
Summoning the dreamers to awake,"

and seems to combine imagery and charm just to the point where more of either would be less of both.

The series called *By Air to Paris*—written in the form of Japanese *tanka* (a poem of five lines or phrases and thirty-one syllables)—contains, perhaps, even more striking instances of the interpretative quality referred to :

" On the sky's margin
A huge band of heavy smoke
Lay and never moved ;
Flying, I left it behind ;
It was the pall of London."

And again :

" I just looked back,
Having flown across the Channel.
What I saw appeared
Like a girl's narrow blue belt.
Where on Earth had England gone ? "

In this series personal realisation of an emotion is expressed with cunning skill and simplicity in utterance.

Cherry Leaves, it would appear, presents a group of flowers rather than a cluster of leaves. Perhaps we are to understand, however, that these slender leaves carry the delicate blossoms fashioned by this gifted Japanese, who can see and tell us of much that otherwise we might not perceive at all.

ROBERT HAMILTON RUCKER,
Expert on Japanese Art,
New York Metropolitan Museum.

ANOTHER NOTE ON ANTHOLOGIES

Some severe things have been written here and elsewhere about the plague of amateur and imitative anthologies, hastily thrown together by unqualified compilers with little reading and less judgment. But lately this annoyance has ceased or has not come our way, although in going up and down the country we find in use meretricious collections of verse that have gained a cheap popularity, particularly where they are the most harmful, where poetic culture is scanty and crude. There is no excuse for the scratch anthology for either children or grown-ups ; the demand is more than met by sound, excellent collections, some notable examples of which we have noticed recently. Here are additions to the list which should be in every poetry reader's hands. Mr. Lennox Robinson's *Golden Treasury of Irish Verse* (Macmillan, 7s. 6d. net) is a companion volume to the standard collection of Modern Lyrics to which we drew attention in our last issue. This Irish Verse book owes its existence to " A.E.," and is thereby placed beyond reproach save in minor details. That it is largely Anglo-Irish modifies the vagueness and tenuity of Mr. W. B. Yeats, who is, however, represented by more pieces (13) than any other singer. We do not know why Emily Brontë is brought in to strengthen the Irish choir when Eva Gore Booth is missing and sweet Moira O'Neill is represented by one piece only. Neither Lionel Johnson nor Herbert Trench is characteristically Irish, yet we have more of them than of James Stephens, and Pierce and his colleagues are omitted entirely, while

the deeply Irish humanity of Stephen Gwynn is represented by one inadequate poem, and at least one piece by Dean Swift might have been omitted.

A most delightful example of the best type of subject anthology is Mr. L. S. Wood's *Youth and Maidenhood* (Dent, 7s. 6d.), which carries a step forward his "Golden Treasury of English Verse on Infancy and Childhood." We urge all "Poetry Reviewers" to add both these volumes to their library. The present one ranges in the best of taste and choice from Chaucer to the latest writers, fortified by a judicious introduction. Out-of-the-way men like Stephen Duck, the Wiltshire thresher-poet, are drawn upon to illustrate the aspirations and emotions of early manhood and womanhood. How well qualified for his task Mr. Wood is we know from contributions to THE POETRY REVIEW, which have set the standard in many English and American colleges. Of Mr. Reed Moorhouse's *Ring of Words*, a collection of poems for children in three volumes (Dent, 1s. 6d. per volume), we shall have something to say in another place. It is compiled with an intimate knowledge of childhood's tastes, interests and needs, and will, we trust, be widely used in preference to less judicious and justifiable collections. Mr. Moorhouse is more catholic than the compilers of *An Eton Poetry Book* (Macmillan, 6s. net), whose objects have been to provide boys with poems which they might reasonably be expected to like and to awaken and encourage their metrical sense. They follow an individual plan, giving examples of various metrical forms, and are not dictatorial or opinionated in their introductory notes to various poets except in a few instances. They tell their readers fresh to the study of the best in poetry—we expect they will be many thousands and that we shall find this anthology a favourite book with youth throughout the land—that "much of Tennyson's poetry is too completely representative of Victorian thought, with its decorous conventionality and rather shallow complacency, to be congenial to modern taste," an unnecessary comment that their examples—more from Tennyson than from any other poet except one—do not justify and to support which they cannot furnish any adequate post-Tennyson examples.

It is only necessary to record the publication of Mrs. Hunt Bartlett's *Sea Anthology* (Erskine MacDonald, Ltd., 6s. net), which has grown out of our Sea Sonnet competition. To the most noteworthy hundred and twenty sonnets descriptive of the sea, selected from the eight hundred submitted, a representative selection of contemporary and earlier English poems inspired by the majesty and immensity of the sea are added, making the collection the most notable and individual of its kind, strictly adhering to its avowed

limitations and enhanced in value by three comprehensive editorial surveys and introductions by Admiral Mark Kerr and Rear-Admiral Fiske.

* * * *

The glamour of Ireland pervades the forty lyrics that make up *Island Blood*, a book of poems by F. R. Higgins (The Bodley Head, 6s. net), who won the Silver Medal for Poetry at the Irish Games last year—a notable contest if much verse of this quality was entered. Forewords are generally irritating, but we can agree enthusiastically with "A.E." who introduces a poet whose soul is in his eyes and is bent on finding delicate words for every delicacy of vision—rare and seldom attainable pursuit. Here is the old wine of poetry with a new label.

* * * *

A year ago we published an appreciation of the poetical work of the late James Rhoades, which must stand as an anticipatory welcome of the winnowed selection of his poems now published by Messrs. Fisher Unwin, Ltd. Mr. Lennox Robinson has overlooked James Rhoades, who is entitled to be included in his anthology of Irish Verse as he was born at Clonmel. But his effective life was spent as an English public schoolmaster—a placid, serious, sincere, cultured life mirrored in his poems, which will continue to appeal by virtue of their severe beauty, exquisite workmanship, clear thought and deep faith in humanity when much of the tawdry stuff that has won fashionable applause is forgotten.

* * * *

A very minor versifier, whose conceit was in inverse proportion to his merit, developed the habit some years ago of ringing up THE POETRY REVIEW on the telephone for the purpose of asserting "I'm a poet and you know it." Constant repetition of this egregious statement failed to convince us, although he has pushed himself, perhaps by similar methods employed on more gullible editors, into newspaper notice and various irresponsible anthologies. He appears to have emigrated to New York, whence we hear that "a poet of some parts—about two or three—when not attending readings of his own verse calls himself up on the telephone and talks to himself about his own verse. He advises other 'poets' to follow his example, explaining that this is the only means whereby one can speak openly, sincerely and convincingly about one's self in New York." We have protested for many years against the arrogation to oneself of the august title of poet, and welcome Lord Gorell's remarks objecting to the loose use of the word.

THE NEW VERSE EDITOR'S LETTER:

ON THE CRITICISM OF POETRY.

THE premium is awarded undivided to Cyril G. Taylor, Teignmouth, for *The Mouse*. He is closely beset by Gertrude Pitt, London, N., with *The Torchbearer*, and by Winifred M. Cousins, Harpenden, with *A Spider Story*. These two thus head the "Highly Commended" in the company of Gustav Davidson, New York, F. A. Carter, Huddersfield, Constance Morgan, London, N.W.3, "Florence Cortis-Stanford," Aberdeen.

My thanks to Editha Jenkinson, Marion Allison, Honor F. Leeke, Joyce Harrison, and "Victor Ballan" for their entries.

The Commended are Phyllis Hastings, Alice E. Collinge, P. Elsley, Margaret Hume, E. M. Frampton, Noël Allport, Blanche Jones, Isabel Baynes Badcock, Mimi Phillips, Petronella O'Donnell, Edith M. Walker, "Editha Melbourne," S. Syme, Florence Overton, Emily A. Crowder, Audrey Bell, M. Pardoe, Margaret Stephens, Ann Hamilton, Frederick Kemp, John Cook, William Borrie, Ben Sowerby and James A. Russell.

"Willow-Catkin" writes: "The poem set for criticism in the current issue is pleasant enough, but it is not arresting; and when you have said that, there is no need to say more. There should be pointed out, however, a common fault in these patterned types of verse—*i.e.*, a refrain should fit grammatically into its context; in this present case, line 12 is just an interruption."

I am varying the exercise somewhat this month: will readers please criticise these *lines* from recent entries:

i. "Make me Thy bee, dear Lord!"
ii. "I cannot visualise the joys of Heaven."
iii. "The fury of the storm had passed away." (An opening line.)
iv. "What magic in a garden lies!"
v. "Burdened with memories of the days gone by."
vi. "Oh, to be in Swanage now that Easter's near!"

* * *

I want to use the rest of my space on this occasion in some sort of analysis of my functions. As a text may I ask you to consider D. P. L.'s *Primavera* (*For the Picture by Botticelli*):

"Spring comes on silent foot.
Silent the bud,
Silent are flower and leaf.
The swelling root
In stillness wakes.
The trembling bird is mute.

Spring hath no crown of gold,
No crimson robe.
The pale austerity of dawn
Serves her to fold
Across her breast
So white and pure and cold."

This poem, having been "Highly Commended" in these pages (p. 51) was selected by Lord Gorell on the occasion of his recent address, to illustrate his criticism of modern verse. People know "this kind of effusion to be nonsense," he said; "the writer can never have seen the picture nor studied the Spring." Coming to his serious criticism for some foothold for argument, we find it may be summed up like this:

i. Lord Gorell identifies "Spring" with a subsidiary figure in the picture, "a laughing, bedecked figure";
ii. Spring is not silent, cold nor still;
iii. These things being so, the poem should not have been highly commended nor printed in THE POETRY REVIEW.

I.

The poet (Yes, this Edinburgh medical student is a *poet*!) coming to the picture with a mind differently enriched with dissimilar associations, has evidently been impressed not by the figure wearing the flower-embroidered robe beneath her wanton face, but by that other, central, dominant form which has been identified not only with Spring, but sometimes with Venus, sometimes with Simonetta Vespucci. Madonna-like, stillness amidst motion, her face betraying a poignancy of sadness, a subdued wistfulness, this gentle, queenly lady expresses that "yearning for something afar" which clings round so many of Botticelli's idealised types, sweet and contemplative. Please accept these epithets: they are Streeter's.

What is Hermes doing in the picture? Does he not suggest the return from Hades of a saddened Persephone? If our critic wishes to identify the wanton with Spring, let him do so; let him make all he can of the fact that the same model as was used for the central figure was later employed for *The Birth of Venus;* but let him not stand in the passages of Jordan crying "Shibboleth. This is my interpretation, and it shall prevail."

II.

Seventy-four years ago Paul Delaroche exclaimed "Painting is dead from to-day." He had just seen the first pictures of Daguerre. Yet the photograph was an invention superior to the daguerrotype,

and " Art " has survived even photography. Lord Gorell is out for photographic truth, and the venue must be selected by Lord Gorell in Lord Gorell's " Park." But there are other studios where you may see quite a different Spring. For Miss Leeke,

> " Euroclydon,
> High on his great, grey wing,
> Beareth him on."

For another poet, for whom Thackeray " would have loved to be his bootblack," the " birds do sing Hey ding-a-ding-ding."

All these things are true. So are our critic's crocuses. So are a thousand other aspects of Spring. I am writing (April 5th) on the Yorkshire moors at the mouth of a great channel of air through the Pennines. I am in mid-England, but there is a smell richer than that of the sea. There is no wind. A thin drizzle is falling. A queer excretion from the twigs invests every bush with the semblance of a white mist. There was never anything more still. (Where are those winds which in November came tearing through the gorge ?) But the sparrows have found the green buds. Spring is in the petrified act of *coming*. . . And this also is *true*. It is but a little further north that the shepherds gather in the firstfruits of the Spring from a white tablecloth which was Winter's last legacy.

III.

I. and II. are quite unimportant, however. This is the great point : that if the Verse Editor of The Poetry Review is to be satisfied of the literal exactitude of every statement in every poem that appeals to him, then no mere mortal can hope to be eligible for the post. Here is a poem about a picture attributed to Lippi and entitled *The Angel Outside the City*. I have not seen the picture. Must I at once set off to view it ? That is difficult, since to be consistent I must also travel—on account of *A Spider Story*, another poem—in the opposite direction to

> " the dim blue isles of a southern sea
> Past Half-Moon Reef and Mosquito Cay
> Past Ocho Rios and Santa Fé "

to see if they really *are* blue.

I need not labour such an obvious point, I trust : poems come in about all sorts of things ; they involve geography, history, botany, geology, physics, chemistry, astronomy, folklore, mathematics, psychology, and every other subject. It may be a subject with which I am quite familiar (and even then I do not turn down my thumb

because I do not happen to agree with the writer), or it may not. The logic of the present criticism (a *reductio ad absurdum*, of course) requires me to master them all, beginning, I suppose, with the Encyclopædia as a preliminary elementary introduction. And when I have done that, what then ? Why then, though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge ; and though I have all faith (in myself) so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity—why then, my Lord Gorell, I am nothing !

Let me conclude, then, by saying that if I were wrong—as I am not—on I. and II., I should be entirely unrepentant, that I should continue my present practice. Let me not pretend to any false superiority over my fellow-contributors. Let me continue to be for them a *corpus vile*, an experimental ear. As long as they continue to honour me by the communication of an exquisite expression, let them not fear any challenge as to the authenticity of the exquisite impression which was its progenitor. When poems are of Spring, I shall not wire for particulars of latitude and longitude. The poem in the present case came exactly like a cool hand on a fevered brow.

SOME FELLOWSHIP VOLUMES

I DO not know whether Mr. Basil Blackwell, the Oxford publisher, has written any verse, but he is certainly a poet. What could be more delightful than his way of printing a little ship on each of his *Adventurers All* series—each gallant vessel with its number on its ensign, and pushing them off from the pondside—breaking, we hope, a bottle of champagne—with all the advantage of an *imprimatur* over his own signature ? Joan Arden's *Unfulfilment* is No. 8 in this little fleet. One is chiefly struck by the great eloquence and sadness that lie in her simplicity :

> " A robin's song drops in the quiet air
> So sad and fresh and incomplete

or, of a blackbird :

> " He flies away from listeners
> Whose hearts he touched with what they do not know."

The short pieces of prose should be mentioned : they are among the best poems in the volume.

Mr. Blackwell publishes also Robert Crawford's *Poems*. This is a more finished writer. His *Eve* sequence is as simple, as dainty and as exquisite as poems can be. He is a real poet who can write such lines as these :

"Day, like a foundering barque,
All noiselessly
Sinks where the years lie dark
And undersea."

This invalid collier's poignant *Coalscapes* attracted notice when first published as the result of a POETRY REVIEW premium poem award.

In Earthen Bowls, by Nellie Burget Miller (Appleton, $1.50), is a notable book. It is on a high level from beginning to end, and a very little pruning would bring this writer's style and imagery to perfection. Her satire is heavy-handed, and her *Day of Rest* is not a patch on Osbert Sitwell's *Church Parade*, but her poetry is the real thing: "A slim moon is moored to my lilac-tree" or "How shall I bear thee, April—now I'm old?"

Cross-words, according to T. P. O'Connor, enrich the vocabulary; similarly artificial verse-forms give it pliability and suppleness. There is every reason for serious students of verse to practise these forms as Miss Bartleet continues to do (*Parterre*, Elkin Mathews, 3s. 6d.), but unless the results are poetic, there is no point whatever in publishing them. I had something to say many issues back on an earlier volume by her.

The child is fortunate indeed who possesses A. Vine Hall's *Rainbow Houses* (Jonathan Cape, 6s.). It is handsomely produced and gorgeously illustrated (by E. J. Detmold). Let me say at once that Mr. Vine Hall is not of those who having produced a miserable piece of versification drop the g's from all the present participles (Lightnin', Smilin', thru'), insert a few score "nices" and label the resultant hotch-potch "For Children." On the contrary, sometimes in spite of himself, he does slip into grown-up poetry; and this is not a fault: children are a good deal more grown-up than we realise. Personally, I am grateful to the author for the following:

"As older children, who
Their Father's likeness draw
Resembling nothing seraph saw
Nor God Himself could recognise;
And when the world, with loud guffaw,
Their God denies
They show—surprise."

The incident on which that is based is delightful, the moral trenchant. His *Voyage to the Cape* (Darter, Capetown, 2s. 6d.) is good stuff, too,

and one may assume that it will also be more attractively produced later.

Messrs. Juta, Capetown, publish a charming little book, *The Song of Table Bay*, by Beatrice M. Bromley. There are attractive marginal illustrations in cobalt and sepia. The verse is nearly all good; and *For a Soldier* ought to prove one of the permanently valuable records of that tragic war.

Miss Hague, well-known to our fellowship, publishes *Poems* with Heath Cranton (2s. 6d.) over the signature "Hugh Fleming." Terse rhymes are these—a few strokes painted in, and the result may stand or fall for all the author seems to care. It is astonishing how many (certainly the majority) are successful. When Miss Hague is pensive, as in *The Wood*, the effect is all the richer.

The remaining seven books are published by Stockwell and have two qualities in common. Most of them contain misprints, and in all of them good and bad work is printed together, cheek by jowl. There seems to be no selective principle at work, no appraisal, no discrimination. The books are entirely individual, however, in their production and format. In *The British Empire, New York and Other Poems* (4s.), Hewson Cohen has rightly conceived the mission of poetry, and it is a pity that in stating it, he should imagine himself to be "a voice crying in the wilderness." His work is full of astonishing word-formations, and when these mean anything, they come across to the reader with real force. Like many others, he adopts meaningless elisions: how on earth is one to read "Thou boast'st" or "Tough fibr'd"? There is much real poetic thought, however. His danger is that of italics and the soap-box.

Much of Mrs. Hall Hains' work (*Poems of Love and the Unknown*) is didactic, and after the school of Wheeler Wilcox. *The Friendly Oak*, however, touches real poetry. So does *The Dream Road, The Law of Recurrence, Dreams, Here is Spring, Silence and Shadows, Come, Sleep*, and *There*, but she too has printed too much.

The Golden Arrow (Barbara M. Tickle, 2s. 6d.) is very well produced indeed. The proem *Salvation* is real poetry; *Ulred*, an astonishing hostage to criticism, being a long poem in rhymed couplets, is often very successful. Miss Tickle has tricks of rhythm which—when they succeed—are very effective:

> "Down in the valley the shepherd lingers
> Upon his homeward path.
> For him each token of the vale
> A quiet meaning hath:
> All things around, awake or still,

Each closing flower, or half-hid nest,
The glow-worm with his lanthorn,
The busy hind at rest."

She is not entirely free from the old myth of "poetic licence," however, and misses out both syllables and words, if they are at all in the way; she often employs well-used coinage, too; and in another edition she will be well advised to scrap a great number of the contents of this. There is an introduction by Bishop Welldon.

Editha Melbourne's *Sheaf of Songs* has evidently been written with both eyes on the composer. Some have already been musicked, and they should be very successful on the concert platform.

Kobeleth is an attempt to re-write the wisdom of Solomon in the quatrains of Fitzgerald. "I am quite conscious that the attempt has failed," writes the author, the Rev. J. W. Brady Moore. Yet there is poetry here and there: it is a pity that Mr. Moore is unwilling to face the tedium of revision.

Piper's Hill, by E. Patteson Nickalls, is printed in so small a type that it is painful to read. I like best *To Pamela;* but I ask the author, the publisher, the public at large, and anyone else who is listening in, what purpose is served by printing such lines as

"Then sing thy song and dance thy dance
O'er meads where streams are murm'ring,
Where insects hum, bees softly drum,
In glades with carols ringing."

If Mr. Stockwell will publish this, the work he refuses must have a museum value.

One would not expect "did'st" in Dr. Bertha Skeat's book, nor "mays't." Yet her book, *The Crucifixion of Mary*, is one of the best of the batch. *The Wind Song* is really a song, and lines such as "We shall not travel—but we made the road" are good to have in mind if ever one is asked to explain what Poetry is.

OLIVER C. DE C. ELLIS.

The usual premium offer (with opportunity for criticism) is repeated, closing date, June 1, for general conditions see page 52.

Twenty members of the Baltimore Poetry Circle of the International Order of Bookfellows, offer through the Circle a prize of $100, to be divided into several awards, in a contest to be known as the "Edward Coate Pinkney" contest, for the best poem in any form except sonnet, rondeau or rondel for which contests are already being conducted, sent in before October 31st to the editor, Leacy Naylor Green-Leach, 1613 Bolton Street, Baltimore, Md., U.S.A., from whom further details may be obtained.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S VERSE.

SOME admirable school work has been sent in for this month's consideration. From the *Oulton Secondary School*, Liverpool, I have a batch which takes the group prize, the Lucchesi bust of Tennyson, given by the President of The Poetry Society. The poetry written by the young people of this school is considerably more readable than much of the verse published in many weekly papers. It shows emotion and imagination, and is free from the trivialities with which young writers sometimes dally, mistaking trite and facile lines for inspiration. A *Bacchanal* by Sidney Taylor, written at the age of twelve, has a really bacchanalian ring to it, and is well-named. It cannot come into this competition, as the writer is now fifteen, but it is well worth quoting.

Lo ! the golden crown's discarded and the golden lute is rift,
And the river's running backward to the skies ;
The old black barque of wisdom has been raped and set adrift,
And the opal in the green cup lies ;
The god's voice, the thunder, breaks in laughter o'er the sun,
And the pipes of Pan are whimpering down the dale,
While the fauns and fays are leaping where the rosy rivers run,
With a Bacchanalian " Hail, all Hail."

The gates of Heaven are open, all bedecked with purple grapes
And the souls in Hell tread out the crimson wine ;
And the torch-light creeps and quivers o'er a thousand dancing
shapes,
'Neath the shadow of the great, blue vine.
Satan is a-grinning in his fiery Stygian caves
And he staggers as he opens wide the bars ;
Neptune comes a-howling o'er his Kingdom of the Waves
And the gods are playing leap-frog through the stars.

The Prodigal, by G. Cadman (16), has for its theme, the memory of a brown smoke-dimmed city, dreamt of in exile. This poem has the somewhat rare quality of conciseness in its really beautiful imagery. To be able to write lines such as " The pillared palms, with listless leaves low-bent " is a performance on which the young author may be congratulated. G. Cadman takes first award in the elder class.

Deep in the languorous noon of tropic day
On the cool turf of a shadowed bank he lay,
Dream upon Dream beat thro' his brooding brain ;
The city, old and grey on hilly height ;
The Mersey, swept with swathes of spatt'ring rain ;
The " Liver " starred with sparks of silv'ry light.

The old brown school, wrapped in mysterious mist
That, with cold and clammy maith the chimneys kissed.
Its stately walls had often pleased his gaze,
But now when seen 'neath blaze of glaring sun,
Faint on the Desert's dancing dazzling haze,
Its simple beauty struck the dreamer dumb.

Oft thro' the arching windows tall, his eyes,
Filled with desire, had gazed on sapphire skies ;
Blue with the lucid heat of June at home,
And oft he thought of liners on the seas,
Of people strange, far lands wherein to roam ;
These were the things he left us for ; just these !

But flaring flowers with none or poisoned scent,
The pillared palms, with listless leaves low bent,
And flaming feathered birds that knew no song,
In time grew tedious to his weary eyes
When seen around and o'er him all day long.
He grew heartsick for England's changing skies.

He longed for Mersey's grey mysterious night ;
The ferry boats with shooting stars of light ;
The light-splashed buildings, bright 'gainst the sky ;
The wash, so slumbrous soft, of swirling seas ;
The wheeling shrieking gulls in flight on high ;
These were the things that drew him home ; just these !

Hilda Bair (age 15) is chosen specially from this school for Honourable Mention.

From Polesworth Central School the children send some pretty little verses, mostly written by scholars of ten years old, who might be encouraged to continue. But their work is of the kind that makes one ask (as I am always asking) " Why not give the children some better models ? " The verses sent in to this page show that young writers re-act very quickly to good models, and their verse nearly always betrays what kind of poetry they have been in the habit of reading.

The High School, Bedford, is a new contributor, and is specially welcomed, as the work sent in is interesting and shows individuality. M. Brian, (age 14) has written a delightful little poem, *A Friend of Mine*, which might have been taken straight out of an illustrated book.

He's an old blue-coated-sailor,
This newest friend of mine,
And his hands are large and leathery,
And tanned by wind and brine.
But, oh! the tales that he can tell
To a little boy like me,
Who has only been to the London Zoo
When he has been to sea.

He sits on the gate and talks to me
Until I think I see
A cannibal, doing a war-dance wild
Beneath date-palms, on the quay.
But, oh! the sights that he has seen,
And he has told to me,
Who has only been to the London Zoo
When he has been to sea.

He's been nearly killed by a mandarin
In a blue and yellow gown.
He's been locked up on a pirate junk
And told that he should drown.
But, oh! the adventures he has had
Compared with a boy like me,
Who has only been to the London Zoo
When he has been to sea.

One of the best poems in the whole competition comes from this school, and is written by Janet Urquhart (age 12). I am afaid I am not quite sure what a "nickel-nosed moon" is, but I feel sure that the young author does!

But this poem has *quality*. Now quality is not easy to describe —one feels it, but finds difficulty in cataloguing it. Janet Urquhart has, however, not only captured and put into words something that belongs essentially to a rather lonely countryside on a January afternoon, but has done it in a way that has literary grace. That last line—"Cockling croweth plaintively"—is a line that lingers in one's mind. Here is the poem, *A Suffolk Landscape on a January Afternoon*, in full. A premier award is given to it.

The sunlit hillside—
Bare, russet trees,
The twittering, trilling birds that fly in heaven,
The golden grass

And golden lighted boughs,
The beech-leaf path that windeth on the slope,
Ploughed fields, brown earth uneven.
Hip-and-haw and bramble-spray
Wind about the hedgerow way—
Cockling croweth plaintively.

Over yon the haze of trees is dim, dim blue,
And the echoing farmyard noises
Intermingle with the silent, tinted stretch of country.
Where the sun has sunk is orange 'gainst the dark of firs:
In the twilight sings a missel-thrush.
Grey creepeth where was faintly rosed,
Moon peepeth pale, but nickel-nosed,
Staring feebly from the sky—
Cockling croweth plaintively.

One more poem called *The Spirit of Life*, sent by J. Smiley (age 15), deserves honourable mention. The writer should send us in some more. And I must really quote in full a little French poem, *La Neige*, written by a Polish girl, Olenka Derezinska (aged 6), and sent from Strasbourg:

Le petit soleil
Il tombe tout frais, tout blanc,
La terre est blanche comme une serviette;
Les gens qui marchent
Creusent la jolie serviette blanche.
Les chiens qui font de petits trous dans la neige;
Les enfants dans le parc
Font des bonhommes de neige,
Et les écoliers jettent des boules de neige—
Et le soleil qui rit et qui chante,
Et cela commence l'Eté!

The awards are:—

For the group-work.—Oulton Secondary School, Clarence Street, Liverpool, a Lucchesi bust of Tennyson, presented by the President of the Poetry Society; books awarded to the individuals mentioned.

Ages fifteen to seventeen.—G. Cadman, from above school, premier award. Hilda Barr, second.

Ages eleven to fifteen.—Janet Urquhart, Bedford High School, premier award. M. Bryan, same school, second.

Ages up to eleven.—A book prize is given to Olenka Derezinska, Consulat di Pologne, Strasbourg, Alsace. No other poems in this class were quite good enough for an award.

MISS LOUIE BAGLEY'S LECTURES ON VERSE-SPEAKING

AN early experience, of bitter memory, has made me chary of attending lectures upon how to speak verse. But when I heard that Miss Louie Bagley, the head of the Polytechnic School of Speech Training, was to deliver a course of three lectures upon that subject I determined to go, because I feel that the matter is of extreme importance, and I wished to hear Miss Bagley's views upon it, since I have long regarded her as a pioneer in a new art, and because I felt that no aspect of the art of verse should be disregarded by the poet. So I tried to forget my long-standing dislike of lectures upon so-called elocution, and went to hear the whole series.

These three lectures, "Problems of Expression in the Speaking of Verse," "Sound as a Key to the Imagination," and "The Speaking of Epic, Dramatic, Lyric and Satyric Verse," for the purposes of criticism—if, indeed, appreciation can be termed criticism—can be regarded as one. They might have been delivered all three upon the same evening and without a break.

As I have already said, the art of speaking verse is of extreme importance, and not merely from the point of view of the poet who writhes so often under treatment. But, as Miss Bagley pointed out, the basis of true expression is of the nature of a philosophic theorem. There is a philosophy of expression, and to read poetry as poetry ought to be read is not just to give proper emphasis both to metre and matter, but to express things which are fundamental in emotional and intellectual life. This requires a strict training, not only in the handling of the voice, but in many other things as well, such as the developing of the imagination, the feelings and the mind. No one can give out the meaning of a poem without understanding that meaning, even when the voice is, according to some lights, properly used. But Miss Bagley would go further, and rightly. In reducing her ideas to a real philosophy of sound she shows that the technique of the art of speaking verse can only exist side by side with the requisite feeling and the requisite imagination. And it is because she seeks to enlarge the capacity of people to feel and to think and, moreover, to visualise beauty in the shape of the spoken word—and poetry is essentially a musical art, an art of verbal sound—that I think she is (with other earnest workers associated with and inspired by the Poetry Society) doing a most valuable work among the coming generation. It is pioneering work which has long been needed and which will bear fruit of the greatest importance educationally. In the last lecture she was assisted by some of her pupils, who gave illustrations to her arguments by speaking certain poems. I was especially struck by the massed effect she was able to obtain in a choral recitation of a passage from Milton. I felt that there were

possibilities still for the choral speaking of poetry, especially of the ode. I remembered Pindar, and felt instinctively how essentially Greek were Miss Bagley's methods of expressing beauty.

WALLACE B. NICHOLS.

THE POETS' FELLOWSHIP—NORTHERN GROUP.

ALL concerned are to be congratulated on the success of the first meeting of the newly-formed Northern Group of the Poets' Fellowship which took place in Manchester at Reeves Café on March 7th. More than thirty people had responded to the invitations sent out, Sheffield, Leeds, Bolton and Liverpool being represented as well as the home town. After tea, during which general introductions were made, the pleasantly informal meeting began. Dr. Ellis, who presided, modestly said that, apart from acting as a trump-marker, he would turn over his duties to Meredith. He used for this purpose " The Quest of the Lily of Light," from *The Shaving of Shagpat*, and compared it with the poet's quest for poetry. He then called on Mr. Hugh Ross Williamson, B.A., of *The Yorkshire Post*, to open the discussion by " A Plea for Form in Poetry."

Mr. Williamson said that in the greatest poetry form and matter were linked. Admirers of *vers libre* seemed to prefer the rough gold case to the same metal wrought and polished by a skilled craftsman. *Vers libre*, however, would be better than mere form without matter. He read some amusing examples of what might easily pass for *vers libre*, and, in conclusion, having shown that almost anything could be written by almost anyone in such a facile medium, he urged writers of verse to use set forms as much as possible.

There was an interesting discussion, those taking part including Mr. Hartley, Mr. Bagshaw, Mr. Aizlewood, Mr. Howard Harris, Miss E. H. Taylor, Mr. G. G. Jenkins, Mrs. Bone, Miss Tickle. There was no doubt that the general feeling was against the more freakish forms of *vers libre*, although it was not utterly condemned There are, after all, the chosen few who really can write poetry in this form. Mr. Bagshaw caused much amusement by describing free verse as a series of " amorphous blobs." The Northern Circle will not forget that. Miss E. H. Taylor, M.A., to whom much of the credit for the success of the meeting is due, kindly welcomed the visitors from other towns. Thanks were accorded to her, and to Dr. Ellis and Mr. Williamson and to the London office. The next meeting will be held in Sheffield, on May 9th, at the house of Mr. Aizlewood, The Bungalow, Ranmoor, from 4 to 6.30. (Dismount from Nether Green or Fulwood cars at Hangingwater Road.) Sheffield members wearing white rosettes will meet trains as required. Miss Taylor has kindly consented to give a paper. G. G. J.

The Shortlands (Bromley) meetings are: May 5th, Poems on Sunshine and Shadow; 19th, Scenes from Plays; June 2nd, Welcome and Farewell.

* * * *

At the Annual Business Meeting of the Highgate Centre on March 18th the following officers and committee were elected: Hon. Treasurer, Mr. A. Blackmore; Hon. Secretary, Mrs. Bouman; Committee, Mrs. Aldred, Mrs. Bird, Mrs. McAra, Miss McClellen, and Mr. W. R. Waide. Mrs. Bird was elected as delegate to the Annual General Business Meeting. The reports of the Secretary and Treasurer were read and considered satisfactory. A hearty vote of thanks was given to Mrs. Aldred for so kindly having had the meetings at her house for the first year.

The Secretary announced that in future the meetings would be held at the Literary Institute, South Grove, Highgate Village, N.6. The following programme has been arranged: May 4th, Lecture on Modern Irish Poets, by Mr. T. Wilson; May 18th, "Swinburne," by Mr. W. R. Waide, and readings by members; June 1st, "Dreams and Visions."

* * * *

The session of the Manchester Centre ended with two very attractive and well-attended lectures. The first on "Dante," by Dr. Edward Somers, the second on "Tennyson's Conception of Life after Death," by the Rev. Leslie D. Weatherhead. Both lecturers were saturated with knowledge of their respective subjects, and this they conveyed to their audience with that ease of manner which denotes close study and an intimate acquaintance with the writings of the poets with which they dealt. The meetings will re-open in September and will be held at *The Social Club, Lower Mosley Street.*

* * * *

The following programme has been arranged by the Hampstead Centre:—

May 5th.—Colour.

May 19th.—"The Faithful Shepherdess," by Beaumont and Fletcher.

June 2.—J. Drinkwater, Lindsay Vachell and Muriel Stuart.

June 16th.—Special Evening arranged by Miss Stanton.

July 7th.—The Bacchæ.

The meetings are held at Miss Julie Huntsman's Studios, 150, Finchley Road, N.W.3, at 7.45 p.m. Further particulars can be obtained of the Hon. Sec., Mr. J. F. Tilly, 32, Camden Square, N.W.1.

EXAMINATIONS IN THE ART OF SPEAKING VERSE: PASS LISTS, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON,

NOVEMBER 22ND, 1924.

CERTIFICATES—Junior (Honours): Eveline J. Boyt, Margaret Barraclough, Christine Dallanbach, Marjorie Roncoroni. (Special Mention): Joan Kerridge, Mary Manners, Anne Parsons, Millicent Moscow, Flora Smith, Doris Hiscock, Mildred Rowe, Betty Toye, Ethel Rowe, Kitty Barbour, Gladys Lowe, Freda Dashevsky, Edna Rist, Margaret Tee, Betty M. Roberts. (Pass): Irene Harris, Marjorie Spiller, Margaret Adkins, Irene Archbold, Marjorie Slocombe, Eileen Morris, Kathleen Watkins, Dora Hughes, Joyce McQueen, Nora Bryon, Zaidee Wearing, Gertrude Goodman, Edna Mainwaring, Sheila Brady, Beryl Clark, Hilda Imeson, Ana Speigal, Dora Gibbs, Betty Wright, Dorothy Kenwright, Harriett Savelsky, Diana Miskden, Miriam Sampson, Peggy Budd, Joyce Edwards, Betty Harris, Lilla Hellrich, Cicely Brackenbury, John Learner.

Senior (Honours): Eileen Jones, Clodagh Russell. (Special Mention): Vera Foote, Barbara Boulton, Hannah Sampson, Katie Pottesman, Doris Cohen. (Pass): Charlotte H. Connah, Ursula B. Branston, Dulce M. Ewins, Marjorie Watt, Edith Thomas, Kathleen Bunker, Phyllis M. Goetzee, Dora Foster, Betty Helliar, Janie Levy, Marion Hunt, Marjory Weiner, Ella Winkworth, Hilda Williams, Eileen Allbrook, Edna Reekie.

Adult (Honours): Dorothy Bullivant, Aurelia E. Davies, Ethel Maud Iredale. (Pass): Lilian Gilbert, Phyllis Lind.

BRONZE MEDALS—Junior (Honours): Evelyn Antrich, Marjorie Ferry, Doris Mitchell, Sylvia Green. (Pass): Violet Curtis, Constance Phillips, Frances Barnett, Katie Nieman, Gladys Green, Myrtle Capper, Ena Eastland, Phyllis Mitchell, Margaret E. Myers, Beryl M. Green.

Senior (Honours): M. Reeves Hutchinson, Helen Blumenthal, Gwendoline Warwick. (Pass): Hilda Pope, Joyce Parker, Joan Amoore, Peggy Dawes.

Adult (Honours): Miss M. E. Truscott, Miss Sybil Raven, Miss Doris Savagar, Miss Edith Grist, Miss E. Howell (s.m.). (Pass): Miss Dorothy M. Wilson, Miss R. L. Tongue, Miss Muriel Penhale, Miss Daisy Shephard.

SILVER MEDALS—Junior: Agatha Carroll, Dorothy Maier, Joan Glover.

Senior: Eileen Mogg.

Adult (Honours): Enid Simpson. (Pass): Dorothy Boston, Ethel M. Iredale.

London, March 7th, 1925.

CERTIFICATES—Junior (Honours): Cynthia Meddowes, Joan Oliver. (Special Mention): Winifred Worvill, Annie Rothera, Doris Clark, Hetty Rees, Doreen MacLaren, Eileen Gregg. (Pass): Gwendoline Yates, Bella Mendlebaum, Kitty Needleman, Kathleen Horley, Miriam Rosenbloom, Winifred Baddiley, Gertie Nadowich, Isabel Worman, Lydia Geneen, Barbara Graham, Jasmine Lane.

Senior (Honours): Kathleen Allen, Hilda Spiro, Catrina M. MacGregor. (Special Mention): Betty Rose, Daisy Barrett, Eleanor Watts, Violet St. Aubyn. (Pass): Gladys Bristowe, Josephine Saltmarsh, Katie Nieman, Annie Shrutt, Doris Cort.

Adult (Honours): Muriel Staveacre, Mollie Dutchman, Eileen Grevener, Evelyn D. Scarfe, Winifred L. Hudson, F. Smith. (Special Mention): Ruby White. (Pass): A. F. Thurston, Rosa Hobill, Margaret Sawtell, Effie G. Davies.

BRONZE MEDALS—Junior (Honours): Rita Hunt. (Pass): Mildred Rowe.

Senior (Honours): Clodagh Russell, Edith Thomas, Janie Levi, Charlotte H. Connah, Marjorie Swan. (Pass): Sophie Spitalnick, Barbara Boulter, Ursula B. Branston, Jessie Dawson.

Adult (Special Mention): Katherine Munday, Elsie V. M. Roberts. (Pass): Phyllis Lind, Nessie Scott.

SILVER MEDALS—Junior: Rose Mintz, Lily Finkelstein, Evelyn Antrich.

Senior (Honours): Barbara Davy. (Special Mention): Audrey Watt. (Pass): Peggy Dawes, Beryl Nelson, Mary Brickell, P. de Lépervanche.

Adult (Honours): E. Beatrice Downe, Marguerite Truscott. (Pass): F. Aurelia Davies, Daisy Sheppard.

* * * *

Meetings of the Golders Green Centre are held at the Institute, (Room 11), Central Square, Hampstead Garden Suburb, on the first and third Fridays of the month at 8 p.m. The following programme has been arranged:—

May 1st.—London.
May 15th.—Elizabethan Poets (excluding Shakespeare).
June 5th.—Twentieth Century Poets.
June 19th.—Yeats.

Information respecting membership of the Centre can be obtained from the Hon. Sec. (*pro tem.*), Mr. J. F. Tilly, 32, Camden Square, N.W.1.